

Wargrave House School

Wargrave House School, Wargrave Road, Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside, WA12 8RS

Inspection dates	15/03/2016 to 17/03/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The school provides outstanding levels of care and support to children and young people. They receive high levels of individual support from consistent staff who work closely and collaboratively across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.
- Children and young people make sustained progress, both academically and personally. Achievements and progress are effectively monitored and demonstrate the difference the school has made in areas such as communication and behaviour. Children and young people grow in confidence and independence as a result of their time at the school.
- Safeguarding policies and practice operate effectively to keep children and young people safe. Concerns are quickly identified and acted upon. The school has a training programme covering a range of safeguarding issues, and works closely with other agencies.
- The school works well in partnership with parents, carers and local authorities. Feedback regarding the residential provision at the school is extremely positive.
- Staff at all levels are committed to improving the experiences of children and young people at the school. Detailed development plans are in place and the areas identified for further improvement will help to ensure good practice in all areas.

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?

- Update the risk assessment for lone working to reflect current practice.
- Review the monitoring arrangements to ensure that minor shortfalls, such as health and safety issues, are quickly identified and followed up.
- Ensure that there is more written detail in recruitment records to evidence management decisions.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at two hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; informal meetings with residential pupils; and meetings with the director of services, senior care manager, deputy care manager, designated safeguarding lead, family liaison officer, head of therapy services, school nurse, estates manager, head of business administration, chair of trustees, finance and personnel assistant, and a number of residential staff. Before the inspection, feedback was obtained from the local safeguarding authority. The boarding accommodation in both the main school building and Lakeside House were visited, and there was scrutiny of a wide range of policies and records. Responses on Parent View, and student and staff responses to Ofsted's surveys were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Lucy Martin

Lead social care HMI

Full report

Information about this school

Wargrave House School is a non-maintained special school, established in 1971, for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The school operates as a registered charity and at any one time offers a day school, extended day, weekly and part-weekly residential boarding for up to 13 residential pupils who are aged from five to 19 years. Residential facilities are on site, both in the main school building and in the post-16 department, Lakeside House. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2014 as part of an integrated inspection which included education.

The residential provision accommodates a maximum of 13 children and young people, and over the time of this inspection seven were resident.

On the same site, there is also a specialist college and accommodation in a separate residential house for students aged 19 to 25 years. This service is registered with the Care Quality Commission and therefore forms no part of this report.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Children and young people make sustained academic and personal progress at the school. Clear targets are set and actioned by all departments in the school. Progress is monitored, for example in areas of communication and behaviour, and demonstrates the significant impact the school has made on pupils' lives.

All areas of the school work closely together in a highly effective, collaborative manner. The handover processes at the end of the school day are particularly comprehensive and actively include the young people. This ensures that both staff and young people are well prepared for the evening ahead. One member of staff said 'I feel that the school works hard as a team that puts pupils' needs, safety and welfare central to its operations.'

The pupils enjoy residential life and feel well supported, valued and respected. Relationships are strong and there is a real sense that the residential staff are committed to improving the lives of the children and young people in their care. Communication with every child and young person is given high priority. The views and feelings of children and young people are routinely sought, including those who do not communicate verbally. One young person commented, 'I consider my place at Lakeside House my other home and look forward to each stay.' Staff successfully promote participation in activities, both in school and in the community, that develop self-esteem and independence, as well as reflecting the interests and abilities of the young people. Events are enjoyed, such as the recent 'Battle of the Bands' that included parents and young people from outside the school.

Safety is well promoted and is underpinned by a range of sound policies and procedures that are effectively implemented in practice. Concerns are acted upon and shared with the appropriate agencies. As a result, children and young people feel safe and valued.

Senior leaders recognise the importance of the residential provision and are committed to continual development. Improvements made since the last inspection include the restructuring of the residential management team and the work undertaken to improve the quality of the placement plans. There are three areas for further improvement to ensure good practice in all areas.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The children and young people staying overnight at the school receive high levels of care and support from a consistent staff team that knows them well. Their individual needs

are very well documented and all members of staff at the school work closely and cooperatively together. The handover meetings between teaching and residential staff at the end of each school day are detailed, and written information is provided to parents. The handover meetings, which take place inclusively with the young people, are innovative and work particularly well in ensuring a smooth transition. These meetings are short, yet interactive, and provide the young people with information and choices regarding the evening's events and activities. Regular key-work meetings ensure that young people benefit from individual time spent with staff, and are well recorded. One young person commented, 'the staff go above and beyond what is expected of them. I always feel safe, well cared for and loved.'

Placement plans are of high quality, and much time and effort has gone into ensuring that they are detailed, up to date and comprehensive in content. They are individually tailored to meet each young person's needs and include target setting with weekly reviews. Recording is of high quality and much thought has gone into developing the daily recording sheet. This covers 24 hours and includes all relevant information, including comments from the night staff. It works well and enables a clear overview of each day. All staff at the school work well together, and regular meetings include members of the therapy team, education and residential staff to review areas such as behaviour support and communication. There are whole school development areas such as 'mindfulness', and training has been provided to staff in this area.

Children's and young people's health needs are very well supported. They are comprehensively recorded in healthcare plans, and the newly developed 'health passports' are of high quality. Medical concerns are well recorded and include regular contact with parents. There are effective procedures for safely managing medication and all staff have to undergo a rigorous medication competency assessment. Medication administration records are routinely monitored and there are well-established procedures for bringing medication in and out of school.

The children and young people take part in a wide range of activities, both on and off the school site, which they enjoy. One young person said 'we consistently take part in activities which are fun'. During the inspection, young people undertook activities such as arts and crafts, computer games and soft play on site, and swimming and bowling off site. All activities are well risk-assessed and the young people are given real choices as to how they wish to spend their time. Skills for independence such as shopping, cooking and household tasks are well supported and are actively encouraged. These activities help the young people to acquire new skills, and build social skills and confidence.

The accommodation for the children and young people is comfortable and generally well maintained, so that the young people feel relaxed and safe. Lakeside, the house for 16 to 19-year-olds, is particularly homely and spacious. New items are regularly purchased in discussion with the young people, and a number of new beds are on order.

The children and young people enjoy the food provided, which is varied and of good quality. The children and young people are offered a choice of hot or cold food at lunch

and at their evening meal. Mealtimes are sociable occasions where the individual likes and dislikes and the support needs of pupils are well known. Older young people are supported to plan, shop and prepare their own evening meals in Lakeside.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Safeguarding procedures at the school are effective in ensuring that children and young people are kept safe from harm. Staff working at the school use their understanding of pupils' specific needs and vulnerabilities well to ensure that their practice effectively promotes children's and young people's safety.

Staff report causes for concern, and good quality written records are maintained. However, there was one occasion where the information would have benefited from the addition of a written risk assessment to indicate more clearly the measures taken to keep pupils safe. Incidents regarding safeguarding are highlighted and appropriately shared with the appropriate authorities. Checks are routinely carried out regarding the use of the internet, and concerns are followed up.

All staff receive a comprehensive induction regarding safeguarding when they start work at the school, and regular staff training takes place. In the last year, staff have attended training regarding child sexual exploitation and extremism. Parents are also made aware of these issues through the school's newsletter. Individual risks to children and young people are documented and acted upon. One new member of staff commented on the thoroughness of the induction regarding safeguarding, and recent training has taken place following the findings of a serious case review. The safeguarding policy is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect good practice.

The staff recruitment processes are robust, and the appropriate checks are always completed before new staff start work at the school. References are verbally verified and there is a comprehensive recruitment checklist which is signed off by a member of the senior leadership team. In the sample of recruitment files seen, there was evidence of clear and effective procedures in place, although more written information would be helpful to evidence decisions taken, for example that concerns on references had been followed up.

Positive behaviour is consistently promoted throughout the school. The residential team works closely with the school's therapists to understand triggers to behaviour and individual communication support needs. Effective and thorough behaviour support plans are in place which are regularly reviewed by staff at a multi-disciplinary meeting. All incidents are recorded and monitored using electronic software. This works well to illustrate patterns and progress regarding behaviour support strategies.

The school and residential provision provide a safe environment for children and young people. Health and safety is taken seriously, with routine checks undertaken regarding fire, electrical and gas safety. Regular fire drills take place in residential time and an

annual fire risk assessment is undertaken. There were minor difficulties regarding evidencing that some routine testing/servicing had taken place. The risk assessment regarding lone working is out of date and does not reflect the current situation when lone working is taking place. This is an area for further improvement.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Good

The residential provision is effectively and efficiently managed as an integral part of the school. There have been changes made to the staffing structure since the last inspection. A number of new appointments have been made and there have been changes to the leadership of the residential provision. Feedback regarding these changes was positive, and senior leaders demonstrate an in-depth knowledge appropriate to their role. The culture of the residential provision is characterised by high expectations and aspirations for all children and young people. There is positive role modelling from senior staff and a real emphasis on young people being actively involved in decisions regarding their care and daily life.

There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty at all times, including overnight. Staff generally feel well supported and have regular supervision. Weekly staff meetings provide an opportunity for the staff team to come together to discuss practice, and are also used for training. There are high levels of consistency within the staff team. The staff team shows real commitment to improving the outcomes for the children and young people in their care.

Staff are well trained and all the team leaders have completed external training at a management level. Work undertaken on training has led to improvements in the residential provision in areas such as the effective use of handovers and the 24-hour recording sheets. Senior leaders and staff keep up to date with current practice and there are detailed development plans in place to which all staff contribute, and this ensures that continued improvement takes place.

Senior staff and trustees undertake regular, robust monitoring of the care provided as well as key records. Policies and procedures are routinely reviewed and updated, and written records are of good quality. The monitoring visits undertaken by trustees are regular and thorough, but they occasionally fail to identify minor weaknesses in areas such as health and safety. This is an area for further improvement.

The school works proactively with parents and has a family support officer. This role provides parents with practical help and emotional support, and includes home visits. Feedback from parents and local authorities regarding the care provided at the school is extremely positive.

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 that 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	134888
Social care unique reference number	SC022446
DfE registration number	342/7009

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	13
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	Five to 19
Director of Services	Mrs Sheila Jaeger
Date of previous boarding inspection	6 November 2014
Telephone number	01925 224 899
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