

# Wells Park School

Wells Park School, Lambourne Road, CHIGWELL, Essex, IG7 6NN

## Inspection dates

13/12/2016 to 15/12/2016

## 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

- Children flourish at the school. The seamless transition between the school and the residential provision results in a highly effective provision and an excellent all-round experience for the children.
- Children radically change their behaviours and make good academic progress because of the stability and routine of the residential provision.
- The impact of the residential experience actively enhances children's personal and social development and achievement.
- Safeguarding procedures are highly effective and routinely implemented by all staff.
- The inspirational leadership and management of the residential provision are the foundation of the school's success.
- Change is unreservedly aimed at improving each child's progress and experience.
- The staff provide extremely strong role models and secure attachments for the children.
- The school is highly valued and respected by children, parents, carers and associated professionals.
- One area has been identified for further improvement. This relates to the electronic database recording.

## **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?**

- Improve the electronic database record to support the classification and follow up of incidents in both school and residential time.

## Information about this inspection

The welfare inspection of the residential provision was undertaken following a notice period of four hours. Meetings were held with the senior management team, the strategic director, the catering manager, care staff, the designated safeguarding person and two health professionals. Inspection activities included scrutiny of policies and records, observation of mealtimes, including sampling food, and observation of the evening routines. 15 parents gave feedback to inspectors, through Ofsted's Parent View and six parents were contacted directly by telephone.

## Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Wells Park School is a residential special school for 50 pupils aged between 5 and 11 years. 40 of these pupils reside at the school for four nights a week. The residential accommodation is provided in four integrated houses located on the school site. The school is situated in a residential area of Chigwell and caters for children who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding**

Children thrive in the residential provision. Several parents spoken to describe the school as having created a 'life changing experience' for their child. The school prepares children for their futures and enhances their life experiences. There are many positive testimonies and success stories. These include reintegration into mainstream school provision, access to other specialist education provision and further education and university entrance. For children who were unable to manage school previously, this signifies great success.

Staff talk with pride about the children's achievements and the fundamental changes that they have made since coming to the school. The 'Pathways' incentive programme promotes children's aspirations to gain this status. Pathways children provide positive role models and demonstrate the personal changes that they have made, showing the way forward and inspiring others.

Children make excellent progress in relation to their initial starting points. Many children have experienced a number of big challenges in accessing education. This school enables them to progress in their education and social and emotional development. This builds children's self-confidence and self-esteem.

Excellent relationships between parents, carers and professionals support the outstanding care that the staff provide. One therapist said, 'The school are extremely proactive. He has made great progress and is encouraged to use his language, resulting in confident communication.' Another said, 'I think that this school is absolutely fantastic. I am so happy to be working here. The boys feel safe and are given wonderful childhood experiences.'

The school is exceptionally well led. Meticulous organisation of the residential provision is key to its success. Improvement work is constant. The children's views, the governing body and the local authority contribute to development plans. The school actively seeks feedback and tackles areas that require improvement with rigour.

Safeguarding arrangements are routinely embedded throughout the school. The environment is safe, extremely well maintained and secure. Children are comprehensively safeguarded and feel relaxed and at home in the residential provision.

Children relish their time in school while acknowledging that there is an adjustment to the beginning of the week following weekends at home. Staff ease children in with Monday in-house activities. This incorporates early showers a hot meal and a slumber style evening. This is key to ensuring that tired children have a routine that is achievable and nurturing. This lays the foundation for learning throughout the week.

### The quality of care and support

**Outstanding**

The school provides a bespoke induction package starting with an interview and a home visit. Discussions with children and their families help the staff to understand each child's individual attributes. Children new to the school visit the residential houses after the

school day and spend a night 'in-house'. This offers a snap shot of the residential routine and time to enjoy fun activities with peers. This provides children with a tailored introduction to the school in preparation for being away from home.

The continuous sharing of information between the school and the care staff supports children's progress exceptionally well. A learning support initiative named the 'Friday Curriculum' transfers learning skills from the classroom to the residential houses. This includes a social skills programme and individual targets for each child. The accommodation is rich in print. Children's targets are displayed and stories, craft and projects support children's literacy and behaviour management.

A pleasant room provides a quiet and comfortable environment to contact home using a range of technology. Children relish using this room. Contact with home is based on children's needs and family routines. The staff facilitate this sensitively using a wide range of media in line with individual requests.

Health professionals regularly visit the school to support the children's physical and psychological health needs. This provides an overview of hospital appointments, ensuring that children are supported by the school to attend. An onsite consultant psychologist provides appointments for the children at the school and external children. This is an extra community resource and raises the positive profile of the school. Training is provided to ensure that health care plans are devised with professionals and that the staff can confidently meet the children's health needs.

The school has a superb catering team. They work extremely hard to provide a wide and varied range of healthy nutritious foods cooked with flair and skill. Alison's bistro is a vibrant and festive dining experience. Children enjoy many healthy options. Brown bread, fresh fruit and low fat yoghurts are offered with a daily salad bar to accompany a healthy main meal. Fresh vegetables are served at each meal. There is one seasonal desert daily, keeping sugar options and additives to an absolute minimum. Local sourcing of foods and autonomy of the food budget enables the staff to provide exceptionally high quality catering. The food fully endorses healthy eating and is enthusiastically enjoyed by the children, staff and visitors.

The quality of the accommodation is second to none. Creative staff have been given the resources to design and decorate the houses. The houses provide extremely comfortable open-plan living accommodation. These include themed stylish decor, modern well-appointed kitchenettes and co-ordinated living areas and bedrooms. Children show respect and care for this well-appointed environment.

Photographs depict a number of activities and experiences, encouraging the children to recall past experiences. Children access many new opportunities, giving them treasured memories of the school. The activity programme is exciting and stimulating. A wide range of experiences include Quasar, swimming, cinema trips, boating, mountain biking, film making, dancing, baking and trips further afield. The children absolutely relish these activities. This helps them to recognise their talents and to build new skills and develop their self-confidence.

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

**Outstanding**

The children in this school clearly feel very safe. Orderly routines and clear boundaries promote a calm and harmonious atmosphere. The school has four golden rules that all of the children know. They enthusiastically participate in a token economy reward system. This links behaviour throughout the 24-hour period with tokens that buy activities and rewards. Children aspire to do well and positive peer role models provide them with extra incentive.

Skilled staff manage behavioural incidents discreetly. However, staff are honest and open with children. This affirms the golden rules that run through the school. Restrictive physical interventions are used when required to prevent a child from hurting themselves, another child or a member of staff. All staff are trained in physical intervention techniques that are only used after de-escalation attempts have failed. This contains difficult situations and keeps all of the children and staff safe.

Safeguarding is at the core of practice in this school. All staff understand their individual responsibility to safeguard each child. Concerns are reported without delay to the designated safeguarding person. The staff act as tenacious advocates for the children. They work to support a number of child protection cases. The school works hard to overcome any barriers faced in working with other safeguarding agencies. On many occasions the school staff have gone above and beyond to support individual children and their families to secure the best outcome for the child. No-one in this school loses sight of this absolute commitment to safeguard children.

An electronic gated system and photographic identification badges for all visitors adds to the robust security of the site. This makes the site harder to access and puts a safe barrier for any children trying to leave the site without authorisation. There are no instances of children going missing from the school.

Recruitment checks for new staff are orderly and meticulous and the personnel files sampled held all of the required checks. These checks are stringently carried out to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with the children.

The school has appointed a new independent listener who has experience of the school and comprehensive safeguarding knowledge. Regular visits build recognition with the children and remind them of her role. When asked about her role she said, 'I was so pleased to be able to come back, as I missed working here so much.' The children benefit from a listener who is familiar to them and understands the impact of being away from home.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Outstanding**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is inspirational. This is key in the school's outstanding success in changing children's lives. The strategic director is pivotal in maintaining this. She leads by example, maintaining a resolute focus on children. The local authority and the governing body recognise her flair and energy. She has a new strategic role to ensure that the high quality care and underlying ethos of the school continues. This culture embraces the schools aims.

The residential provision is integral to the school. Links between the school and

residential houses are seamless, fully supporting a 24-hour curriculum. This enables the children to develop a wealth of new skills.

The core staff team are established and long serving. The staffing levels fully support children's needs, safely facilitating an exciting and stimulating programme of activity and time 'in-house'. Staff all benefit from training in Transactional Analysis to provide an approach that is research-based and considered. This consistent approach is key to helping the children to develop better ways of managing their emotions. All staff are trained to level 3 and they complete a wide range of mandatory training courses to fully equip them for their roles. The team are informed, intuitive and confident practitioners.

Staff work collaboratively to help the children to make positive changes. The diverse team has a wealth of expertise and skills. Their interests and abilities make the residential experience beneficial. Clear accountability and shared responsibilities empower the staff team. The senior management recognise and utilise the staff's skills. Residential staff describe the children's achievements with pride and passion. One member of staff said, 'I'm so glad that I am doing something that is changing children's futures.'

The school continually strives to improve practice. Development plans evidence exciting new projects. Forward thinking and ambitious vision drive these plans. Practice is worthy of wider dissemination and is revered among other schools and the local authority. All professionals spoken to are happy to be part of such a successful and happy school. The sharing of expertise with other schools and the generation of community resources give this school a beacon status.

There is a concise policy about the management of complaints. Although feedback is encouraged there have been no complaints. Compliments are abundant and include a number of testimonies about the positive impact of the school. Parents unanimously describe the school as life changing. Their children's lives have been turned around. The school has become their core stability, helping them to improve in all areas.

Feedback from parents includes:

- 'I cannot fault the school in any way. I am glad that I got to speak to you as I cannot speak highly enough of the school.'
- 'I have no issues and can't fault them. He leaves next year and this is my only worry.'
- 'It's a fantastic school, they have all helped him so much, teaching staff and house staff and senior leadership.'

A number of letters from parents and children detail the positive impact of the school in determining the children's success. These include sporting champions, university access, achieving excellent A level results and reintegration into mainstream education.

The governor's reports have radically improved. These include more rigour and summary of impact for the children at the school. Regular visits have a specific focus area. The governors have a level of expertise relevant to the identified area. The reports cover premises, meeting with children and a review of safeguarding and medication. This provides an objective overview.

The school has radically changed its records system to an electronic database. The



implementation of this has been successful and records pertaining to individuals are easily accessible. Although this works for recording purposes, data interpretation can be slow. Some tabs do not clearly define the nature of the incident. The system is not streamlined and this hinders the definition and monitoring of incidents.

Overall the school has consistently achieved outstanding outcomes for children, recognised in both the welfare and education provision. All of the national minimum standards are met.

## 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>             | 881/7022 |
| <b>Social care unique reference number</b> | SC018021 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 115450   |

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>                       | Residential Special School   |
| <b>Number of boarders on roll</b>           | 40                           |
| <b>Gender of boarders</b>                   | Male                         |
| <b>Age range of boarders</b>                | 5 to 11                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                          | Carol Mitchell               |
| <b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b> | 24/09/2015                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                     | 0208 502 6442                |
| <b>Email address</b>                        | admin@wellspark.essex.sch.uk |

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