

Wishmore Cross Academy

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

Inspection dates

13/03/2017 to 15/03/2017

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

- Boarders benefit from an excellent multi-disciplinary professional network that monitors and meets their complex needs very effectively.
- Boarders make substantial progress in the boarding house and form close relationships with staff.
- Behavioural management is highly effective and inventive. Staff offer an extremely broad range of interventions, including restorative conferencing, to ensure the safety and stability of boarders.
- Boarders benefit from a highly dedicated and professional staff team, which offers consistently high-quality care.
- Admissions processes are rigorous and very effective. Staff visit prospective boarders at home and liaise closely with professionals, and this ensures minimal disruption to those already resident.
- Staff work extremely well with parents. Staff advocate on boarders' behalf to ensure that they receive appropriate specialist intervention.

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?

There were no areas for improvement identified during this inspection. All recommendations were actioned during this inspection.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with two hours' notice. Inspection activities included: formal and informal discussions with boarders, sharing meals with pupils and observing a young people's consultation meeting. Discussions took place with the headteacher, head of care, the lead therapist, other members of the senior management team and members of care staff. Two governors were interviewed in person, and a telephone discussion also took place with the independent visitor. A wide range of documentation concerning the residential provision was scrutinised. There were no responses on 'Parent View' for any analysis, but telephone discussions took place with four parents.

Inspection team

Barnaby Dowell

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. The academy is a special school for young people, all of whom have behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties as their primary need. The academy can admit up to 60 boys between the ages of 9 and 16 and can offer up to 22 residential places for four nights per week. Within the building, there are three separate residential units. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Boarders have pride in their home. They understand behavioural expectations and speak of 'repairing the harm' and consider the effect of negative behaviours on the wider boarding house as a community. Ownership is further promoted by staff encouraging older boarders to mentor and support their younger peers.

The boarding house is divided into separate purpose-built units, each with their own living-room areas and washing facilities. This allows boarders to enjoy age-appropriate activities and reduces the risk of bullying. Boarders report a good range of healthy meals with choice available.

Boarders learn new social and independence skills. Excellent use of restorative conferencing allows boarders to resolve their differences amongst themselves in an open and mature manner. Conferences are held promptly and before disputes escalate. This promotes positive relationships and outlines the positives of negotiation as opposed to physical violence.

Outcomes and progress for boarders are excellent. At the conclusion of their final academic year, each boarder moved on to planned further education provision. Attendance for boarders is 10% higher than that of day learners, and examination attainment is double. This progress is attributed to high-quality care offered in the boarding house. Educational achievement is prioritised and incentivised. Staff recently established a homework club and supplement school work with extra resources from the internet. Boarding staff liaise regularly with school staff using the 'behaviour watch' system. This system allows behaviour to be tracked and analysed.

Flexible boarding arrangements and strong partnerships with key professionals support boarders and their families at times of need and crisis, and this promotes very positive relationships.

High staffing levels allow for increased support at moments of high vulnerability, such as moving from school into the boarding house. Teachers from school are able to visit the boarding house to offer extra support. During these visits they engage boarders without the pressure and distraction of the day school, further promoting positive relationships in a different environment.

Staff are proactive and build a 'family style' environment. They consistently go above and beyond to support boarders. A culture of aspiration is evident throughout the living space, including motivational phrases and posters to encourage boarders to maximise their potential. Boarders are able to access a range of opportunities outside of the boarding house, including extra tutorial support.

Feedback from parents, boarders and key professionals is consistently positive. They view the boarding provision as integral to the school. One parent stated, 'We would be in real trouble without the boarding house,' and a boarder said, 'It is good here.'

Being a boarder is a source of pride and this inspires them to maintain good behaviour in the day school. Boarders enjoy a wide variety of activities and full use of the school's leisure facilities. Activities include a recent excursion to watch the England football team at Wembley stadium and weekly visits to a local trampoline centre.

Staff access a range of interventions to support boarders when they are not in the boarding house. Local youth services consistently work with parents to offer extra support for parents at key moments of vulnerability, such as the long summer holidays. Specialist anger-management support and key work assists learners in recognising their trigger behaviours and learning new self-regulating skills, such as taking deep breaths.

The ethos of the boarding provision is consistently child centred. The voice of boarders is heard loudly by staff, either directly or via surveys, and independent advocacy is routinely offered. Boarders are encouraged to attend to their care planning meetings and contribute to the drafting of care plans. A new pool table was recently provided, following a request from boarders.

Staff enjoy warm and consistently positive interactions with boarders. Achievements are celebrated, and when boarders struggle, staff offer constructive and positive alternatives. This maintains excellent behaviour and stability within the boarding house.

Culture and difference is celebrated. A map of the world records the home countries of the boarding house staff. This promotes discussion about the traditions and cultures of the respective homelands. Staff are quick to address any discriminatory language. This promotes respect and acceptance.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

There is a strong theme of 'holistic care' in the boarding house. This is replicated in the main school. Staff understand that academic progress is facilitated by boarders feeling happy within themselves and engaged. This supports strong relationships and a range of well-planned and effective interventions.

Induction processes are extremely effective. During home visits by boarding staff, accompanied by the school's in-house therapist, behavioural expectations are explained and outlined in a behavioural contract. Boarding staff are extremely confident in their own practice, and they ensure that the boarding experience has a positive impact.

During induction, staff skilfully engage parents to gain a full picture of any possible risk factors which may affect the running of the boarding house. Parents are encouraged to supply boarders with mobile phones without internet capability, therefore allowing staff to ensure safe access by way of the internet filter system within the boarding house. This limits young people's use of social media sites such as Facebook and reduces possible causes of conflict within the boarding house.

Work with parents is a major strength. Parents report a 'constant flow of information and weekly phone calls from staff'. Parents report the flexible care arrangement as a major positive. Staff routinely attend important meetings, such as child protection case conferences, and also support parents outside the boarding provision, for example by attending important medical appointments with them. Parents trust staff and support their interventions, offering consistency and security for young people.

Staff use their own expertise to improve the living environment and teach boarders new skills. One staff member is presently working with boarders to install a projector. This will allow a cinematic effect during 'movie night'.

Physical health is prioritised and monitored by key professionals. Boarders enjoy good access to health care services. Boarders respond very well to constructive routines and daily planners. This supports them to develop key routines, such as laundry and self-care skills.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The boarding house is a safe and well-monitored area. All risk assessments and health and safety checks are carried out regularly. A recent food hygiene inspection gave the setting a five star rating. The building is protected by key fob access, which ensures that inappropriate people do not access the building.

There is a strong safeguarding culture. Recording systems track and monitor the progress and impact of potential concerns. The local designated officer is contacted for advice when required. Staff report a culture of openness, and the whistleblowing policy is understood. Photographs of the safeguarding leads are evident throughout the premises, and staff report that they are a regular source of advice and guidance. Staff understand the safeguarding policy and report any concerns accordingly. The school governor with safeguarding responsibility is a qualified social worker. They are an important source of specialist advice and challenge to placing authorities and advocate for boarders. Safeguarding is based on excellent communication and liaison with key professionals, both in the school and in the wider community. There are no reports of bullying. Boarders are aware of whom to contact if they feel upset or unsettled.

All activities are appropriately risk assessed and supervised. When it is clear that boarders may struggle in the community, staff offer high levels of support and prompts to ensure that activities occur without incident.

Risk assessments are multi-faceted, robust and incorporate the views of parents and boarders. They offer a clear and vivid picture of boarders' needs and vulnerabilities. Boarding staff review these regularly, and this informs key decision-making, such as the allocation of single or double rooms for boarders. This ensures their safety.

Support plans are based on strong theoretical principles. They incorporate the key themes of documents, such as education, health and care plans, to provide a comprehensive targeted intervention. Routines are individualised and can be adjusted dependent on need. One boarder is able to access food after bedtime, as taking his

medication makes him hungry late in the evening. Boarding staff regularly assess and review behavioural patterns and provide specific activities or key-work sessions in response to issues identified.

Behavioural management is highly effective and central to the ethos of the boarding house. There has been no use of restraint in the boarding house for over three years. Staff understand boarders and respond expertly and swiftly to intervene before situations worsen. Excellent de-escalation skills support this.

Boarders benefit from a points-based behavioural management system. The system is both enjoyed and understood by boarders. Positive, consistent behaviour allows boarders to earn privileges and rewards. This negates the need for money to be held in the boarding house, reducing the risk of loss and bullying.

Boarders do not go missing. In the event of a missing incident occurring, staff understand the procedure to follow, and each boarder has a specific risk assessment and action plan to support them.

Medication is safely dispensed. Levels are regularly reviewed by the professional network to ensure maximum effectiveness.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The head of care has been in post since September 2015. He is a conscientious and charismatic leader who is well respected by staff and boarders. His enthusiasm is infectious and motivates the staff team. One staff member referred to him as 'fantastic'. He is presently undertaking his Level 5 qualification and is due to complete it in September 2017. He enjoys an extremely positive working relationship with the school's senior leadership team and is well supported by a senior residential care worker.

He understands the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding house and is eager to promote a culture of development. He completes one sleepover shift each week in the boarding house, and this informs his plans for improvements. He has recently accessed a package of learning materials from a national organisation for boarding schools.

The head of care offers a high level of staff support, including debriefs and support after each behavioural incident. A strong child-centred ethos underpins practice. Staff develop empathy and consistently reflect on the message being communicated by boarders and specific behaviours. This encourages staff to reflect on specifics, such as verbal and body language used, and this reduces incidents of concern.

Senior leaders use their own research to inform and develop practice. Other relevant research is also analysed and assessed. The co-principal is a leading authority on avoiding the use of restraint. This specialist source of advice and guidance for staff is interwoven into the ethos of the school.

An ambitious service development plan is in place. There is a consistent desire for improvement. Managers are presently expanding the use of chronologies on case files to

improve recording and illustrate the progress made by boarders.

Managers learn from mistakes and implement new strategies for service improvements. Following a recent medication error, the recording system has been improved and new medication bags have been introduced to prevent repetition. All of the recommendations suggested prior and during the course of the inspection were actioned. This included providing full contact details for the children's commissioner and ensuring that first aid boxes were fully supplied.

Case files indicate a high level of management oversight and audit. Managers use their close relationships with staff and boarders extremely effectively to advise and guide them and to prioritise the needs of boarders.

Effective scrutiny and evaluation of safeguarding practice is evidenced by the independent visitor and governors. The head of care reports that he values the independence and oversight of 'another voice'. Meetings occur regularly, and a climate of openness and transparency is reported.

Staff morale in the boarding house is very high. There has been one staff departure since the last full inspection. The team is long standing and cohesive. Staff receive very good levels of training, performance appraisal and supervision. Staff are aware of updated government guidance on keeping children safe in education. They have a keen awareness of the factors of risk affecting boarders in the community, such as child sexual exploitation. Safeguarding training is provided by the designated governor, and other training is provided online and from a national organisation for boarding schools.

Recruitment processes are rigorous and effective. This minimises the risk of inappropriate adults being employed in the boarding house. Following interview, staff are invited to complete a trial shift in the boarding house. This provides a further opportunity to assess their suitability to engage with boarders.

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 exceed the standard of good and result 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	SC1021024
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	10
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	
Date of previous boarding inspection	18/11/2015
Telephone number	01276 857 555
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