

Wolverdene Special School

Wolverdene Special School, 22 Love Lane, Andover, Hampshire SP10 2AF

Inspection dates	27/03/2017–29/03/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
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

- Seamless links exist between parents, the school and the residential provision. This provides a cohesive and informed approach to the delivery of effective care.
- The children benefit from new experiences that broaden their horizons, improve their self-confidence and build resilience.
- The children are central to practice and make good progress in relation to their starting points across all areas of their development.
- A family liaison worker provides an invaluable support service to the children and their parents.
- Parents and external professionals are positive about the quality of the service provided. Communication is good, promoting a partnership approach to meeting the children's needs.
- The residential provision presents as warm, clean, welcoming and homely.
- The children's safety is a high priority in the school. Safeguarding arrangements are strong. Effective whole-school systems keep residential children safe.
- Monitoring reports completed by the governing body lack challenge and evaluation.
- Behaviour management policies and records lack clarity on how to manage children's behaviour.
- There are three unmet national minimum standards and three areas of practice that the school could improve further. While these shortfalls are recognised, there is little impact on the children's care presently.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (NMS 13.4)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that children are offered nutritious and healthy options at breakfast and snack time.
- Ensure that any concerns raised are clearly recorded and that records detail all the actions taken.
- Consider the residential routines to ensure that children have opportunities to further develop their independence skills and make choices about where they spend their time where this is safe and appropriate to do so.

Information about this inspection

The welfare inspection of the residential provision was undertaken by two inspectors following a notice period of three hours. The inspection activities included: meetings with the senior managers, staff and children; scrutiny of policies and records; and observation of practice, mealtimes, activities and evening routines. Parents gave feedback directly to inspectors through telephone discussions. There were three Parent View responses received during the inspection.

Inspection team

Natalie Burton	Lead social care inspector
Deirdra Keating	Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Wolverdene is a local authority school within Hampshire catering for primary age children experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school provides mainly day placements. 10 weekly residential placements are available for boys within The Lodge, which is a separate unit located within the school grounds. The Lodge accommodation consists of 10 single rooms with shared facilities.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The positive impact of the residential experience is unquestionable. Education attendance is excellent. Children make considerable progress across the curriculum and towards their individual targets. The improvements in their behaviour mean that children, who have previously been unable to attend school, can benefit from the classroom environment, access learning and develop social skills. Attainment and progress are evident from the start and continue throughout the school. A good range of interventions and therapies supports children's physiological and emotional well-being.

The children make good progress as a result of the care and support that they receive at The Lodge. They progress in their self-care skills, communication and behaviour. They learn about communal living, sharing and respect through their stay. Children develop acceptance and tolerance of others. This builds children's resilience, self-esteem and confidence.

Expectations are high and staff are consistent in their approach, providing stability and security through familiar routines and a celebratory reward system. Staff verbally praise children's achievements, and children are keen to be 'the star of the week'. A weekly special assembly recognises children's achievements across the school.

Children are happy at the school, they enjoy coming and feel proud of their achievements. Parents unanimously hold positive views. One parent said, 'We are very impressed with the school. It's far exceeded our expectations.'

Safeguarding arrangements are good and systems are established and implemented well by vigilant staff. The school works hard to represent children in a number of meetings and arenas. Staff work as part of a multi-disciplinary team that includes a number of professionals. This supports children's welfare and well-being.

The residential provision is managed within the school. This is organised with a management structure included within the senior leadership team. The drive to focus on improvement has been overshadowed by staff changes and staff shortages. This has resulted in several unmet standards and three points for improvement. While these do not impact significantly on the quality of care provided, improvement is not noted. The leadership team demonstrates an absolute commitment to address these areas.

The quality of care and support

Good

Induction and transition are a notable strength of this school. The initial home visit provides information about the school for the family and a point of contact for children new to the school. Family support work continues providing support and parenting programmes. This builds a positive partnership with parents from the start. Parents report positively about their engagement with the school, the staff and the communication.

Relationships between staff and children are good and based on an attachment model. Staff are tactile and warm, providing children with continual reassurance and security. Children appear at home and relaxed in The Lodge. They are generally confident to voice their opinions. Staff are careful to ensure that group dynamics are monitored

closely to enable everybody to feel equally valued and safe.

Health and emotional well-being are managed well. Health plans are basic although detail medication and link to action plans that support specific needs. This guides staff in a consistent approach to children's care. Medication is stored appropriately and administered carefully. Some children access in-house therapeutic counselling or meet with the occupational therapist and receive 1:1 support. In addition, the child and adolescent mental health services attend the school monthly. Children referred are seen with their parents. These visits also provide an opportunity for staff to discuss any concerns and seek advice with regard to individual children. This supports children's emotional and psychological needs.

Children's contact with home is easily facilitated, and staff manage this appropriately in line with the children's ages and abilities. All parents and children spoken to say that this arrangement is suited to individuals.

The Lodge provides a cottage style decor with comfortable sofas and pine dining table and dresser. The kitchen is well equipped and shower rooms have been refurbished to provide pleasant and clean showers and bathrooms. Single bedrooms afford each child privacy when required. Communal areas provide enough space and children make good use of these. Morning routines include the expectation that children stay in their rooms until 8.00 am. Meals can take a long time and mealtime routines do not foster the development of children's daily living skills. Menus are influenced by children's choices, but while evening meals are reasonably balanced, breakfast and snacks include few healthy options. Staff sit with children while they eat and use mealtimes as a social occasion.

Activities are provided every evening and include ball games, DVD night, outdoor play, reading, go-karting and trips out. This gives children opportunities to develop their social skills and pursue some of their interests.

The school council has a representation of children from The Lodge, and there have been three meetings in the last year. This gives children the chance to raise requests and ask for resources. The headteacher responds to requests and updates children about what has been agreed. Boarders meeting minutes also capture children's views and ideas in terms of resources, activities and trips.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Children's safety is a priority in this school. There are few incidents of risk-taking behaviour. Bullying is not identified as a concern, because staff are vigilant and responsive. Children's ages mean that there are some physical and verbal altercations that require swift interventions. Staff challenge children quickly during any altercations. The children spoken to say that they feel safe and supported by staff. Parents contacted during the inspection feel absolutely confident in the school to keep their children safe and promote an atmosphere where all children feel comfortable.

The staff approach to safeguarding is thorough. They are all trained and aware of the route to take in the event of a safeguarding concern. The designated safeguarding lead maintains a log of all child protection concerns and these detail the immediate action taken to protect children's welfare. When the school has not been satisfied with a response from external agencies, they have challenged their actions and responses. All

staff have received training in the 'Prevent' duty for schools. While no concerns have been raised, this ensures that staff have an awareness. There has been one allegation since the last inspection, and appropriate action has been taken in agreement with the local authority designated officer. This ensures that children are safeguarded.

Children's rooms are private and their belongings are safe. The children feel able to raise concerns that affect them. They can speak with staff and have access to a private telephone to access a family member. In addition, there is an independent visitor who the children can contact.

Behaviour in general is good, although there are incidents in relation to the difficulties faced by children in terms of self-control and managing their behaviour. Staff concentrate on positive rewards and are knowledgeable about the children's individual needs. There are a number of incidents that require physical interventions and sanctions. However, the behaviour management policy lacks clear guidance regarding permissible sanctions and records do not always demonstrate that children have been able to provide their view of the measure of control used. In addition, for some children, there is a lack of clarity regarding information that may be helpful to staff in managing their individual behaviour. This includes the omission of potential triggers, types of preferred hold and what is most helpful to the child. The management are aware of this shortfall and are currently in the process of implementing a new behaviour management system.

Children do not go missing from this residential provision. There are no concerns in regard to child sexual exploitation. However, the staff have an understanding of the signs to be aware of.

Appropriate staffing ratios are in place and risk assessments are used to keep the children safe during off-site activities. Risk assessments are routinely generated using an electronic system. Parents sign consent forms for off-site activities. The venue and transportation are managed in line with the risk assessment.

The physical safety and site security are managed well. This includes service appliance checks, fire prevention equipment and hazard management. This maintains a safe environment. Fire evacuations are regularly carried out and discussed with children to reinforce their understanding of what to do in the event of a fire. Visitors are managed carefully and supervised well. The site is secure and care is taken to ensure that there are no unwanted visitors.

Three staff have been recruited in the last few months. The personnel files show that suitable checks were completed. The office administrator, the headteacher and the head of care have attended training on Safe Recruitment in Education. This has provided the latest guidance on best practice in recruiting staff.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The residential provision is integral to the school. The senior leadership team works hard to provide care and education that are seamless. The aims of the provision are fully realised. Children successfully attend school and make progress both academically and socially. There have been no exclusions in two years. The staff believe in individuals and demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to each child. The headteacher has effective relationships with other sector-based organisations to inform practice and improve the lives and experiences of the children.

There are enough staff to ensure that evenings and mornings are safely supervised. This has been a challenge as 50% of the care staff team members are on long-term leave. There have been three new appointments, meaning that several staff members are in their probationary periods. School staff who provide pastoral support have provided cover in the evenings, lessening the impact of staff being away. The deputy head of care has stepped up to temporarily manage the provision. This has provided consistency for children and effective management. The role is extremely busy, meaning that she is managing a number of competing demands. Despite this, children are placed first and foremost, prioritising their individual needs. However, there is an impact, a number of records and systems are in their infancy and yet to be embedded. Monitoring and critique of the provision are weak and there is a lack of drive to address the previous points for improvement. This does not demonstrate continuous improvement or strong compliance.

Complaints about the school are minimal and exceeded by positive feedback. However, on one occasion where a concern was raised, appropriate action was taken to gain further information, but records held did not demonstrate all of the action taken.

Induction arrangements are strong. One member of staff spoke positively about the benefits of the three month induction, which supported them in developing an understanding of the ethos, policies and procedures of The Lodge. Staff benefit from regular supervision which provides a detailed critique of performance, identifies training needs and supports staff in their roles. These link clearly to the school development and action plan. The senior leadership team has high expectations. It recognises shortfalls and identifies areas for improvement.

The leadership team and governing body regularly review and update policies, procedures and guidance to ensure that they meet the changing needs of the children. These are available on the website for current and prospective parents. The governors strive to build their knowledge and understanding of the school, enabling them to support and challenge the leaders.

Staff absence has resulted in poor internal monitoring and lack of oversight. External monitoring visits are regular and the record template prompts areas for the visitor to check. There is very little time spent with children and no evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided or whether children are safeguarded. This was raised as a point for improvement at the last inspection. This has not been met and therefore has been raised again.

The school has extremely good relationships with parents and professionals. Feedback was obtained from 90% of parents and a social worker. This was unequivocally positive. Quotes from parents include:

- 'The school has far exceeded our expectations.'
- 'Just positive feedback, they are brilliant.'
- 'Communication is good and there are no concerns.'
- 'I feel that my son is in the best care and I am really happy with the school.'

There are two unmet national minimum standards and one point for improvement identified as shortfalls under leadership and management. These do not have an impact on children's care presently, although they demonstrate a lack of accountability and little ability to improve since the last inspection.

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	116635
Social care unique reference number	SC012029
DfE registration number	850/7067

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	51
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	6 to 11
Headteacher	Paul Van Walwyk
Date of previous boarding inspection	09/02/2016
Telephone number	01264 362350
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