

Penn Hall School

Penn Hall School, Vicarage Road, Penn, Wolverhampton WV4 5HP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Penn Hall is a Wolverhampton Local Authority Community Special School for young people aged three to 19 years, whose special educational needs fall predominantly in the category of physical disability and complex medical needs. Some young people have an associated learning difficulty related to their physical disability. An increasing number of young people have communication difficulties. The school is located on the outskirts of Wolverhampton. It can accommodate 84 young people. The residential provision is on the school site. Six young people stay overnight at any one time. All young people attending the school are able to stay at the residential provision.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 5 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Residential staff create an inclusive environment where disability is not a barrier that limits young people's experiences. Residential staff, leaders and managers have high aspirations for young people.
- Young people experience exceptional care during their weekly stays and have secure relationships with care staff who are extremely dedicated to their work, highly trained and experienced.
- Residential staff use praise in every aspect of residential life. This, in turn, gives young people high expectations of themselves and others.
- Competent leaders, managers and staff have created a deeply caring and nurturing residential special school. They have translated their vision effectively into excellent practice.
- Strong leadership, rigorous monitoring, an inclusive approach and strong partnership with parents and other professionals have secured exceptionally positive outcomes for young people. Consequently, young people blossom and thrive across different aspects of their development and welfare.
- Effective leadership ensures that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and that staff apply these procedures to make sure that young people's vulnerabilities are fully protected.
- Staff are imaginative in their care to make each young person's stay memorable.
- Staff work diligently to make sure that young people's residential experiences have a positive impact on their physical, emotional and psychological well-being.
- Staff learn from research to help them focus on the things that matter to young people.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The current complaints process is not suitably accessible for all young people who stay in the residential provision. This means that young people with particularly complex needs cannot make an independent complaint without the support of an adult.
- There is no clear format in place for the appropriate review of physical interventions in the event that they should be necessary.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This is an outstanding service because young people make exceptional progress across all areas of their development as a direct result of their experiences at this school. Leaders, managers and staff have a strong commitment to continued improvement, which is focused on the needs of young people. The whole-school approach includes highly effective partnership working with parents, placing authorities and external agencies. Together with rigorous monitoring activities, this approach consistently secures exceptionally positive experiences for young people. Consequently, young people blossom and thrive from their positive experiences at this school and make outstanding progress.

Young people are empowered to make a positive contribution to their residential and school lives. This level of positive engagement enables young people to develop their self-esteem and to gain increased confidence. Consequently, young people overcome barriers that have previously hindered their learning and attainment. Young people are given excellent opportunities to build social networks, including being involved in outward bound residential experiences and various community-based activities. These have recently included trips out for bowling, meals, and laser quest and give young people a real sense of community engagement.

One young person refers fondly to the provision as 'the school hotel'. Young people say that they love staying overnight. This was evident at the inspection from their verbal feedback, facial expressions including non-verbal clues and other non-verbal behaviours.

The head of care and residential staff have created a well-organised, safe, calm, caring and highly nurturing environment. Staff consistently provide an environment in which speech and language are effectively reinforced by the use of visual symbols and signs. This secures a high level of meaningful participation. Consequently, young people grow in confidence and are able to express their views and be involved in meaningful decisions about their school experience.

Residential staff make sure that mealtimes are positive social occasions. Staff use these times to support young people to develop their interaction skills as well as practical skills. Care staff encourage young people to try new foods, including different textures. This enhances young people's mealtime experiences and their social skills. Residential staff members are exceptionally skilled at making young people feel understood and valued. Staff are very sensitive to the subtle changes in young people's behaviours and adapt their approach accordingly. Staff are aware of the different speeds and the ways by which different young people process information. As a result, staff know exactly when to give each young person space and when and how to guide them to a different activity or environment. This often involves using visual prompts. Staff members' timely, precise, consistent and skilled

interventions prevent escalation of negative experiences/behaviours and strongly promote a positive atmosphere at the residence. Potentially negative behaviours are identified and responded to at an early stage, with firmness and kindness.

Young people respond exceptionally well to spending time at the residential provision. Young people have built up trusting relationships with staff members and friendships with other young people. They have positive experiences in a safe and familiar environment. This reduces their anxiety levels and prepares them well for new experiences and learning. As a result, the young people have become more engaged and self-assured. During this inspection, young people were observed engaging in a range of activities that promoted the development of social interaction skills and the understanding of actions and consequences. Young people's involvement in such activities supports their development to being active citizens in their school community.

Young people receive excellent healthcare. Careful sharing of health information between parents and staff ensures that young people's health needs are met. Young people receive comprehensive therapeutic support and always receive the medication that has been prescribed for them. The recent introduction of an additional nurse means that the residential service has become more accessible for some young people with the most complex needs. Residential, health and education teams work together closely to ensure that the young people's individual needs are well understood and met. Staff meet on a regular basis to agree joint strategies and evaluate their effectiveness. Meaningful partnerships are established with parents and other professionals involved in the young people's lives. Young people receive consistent and seamless support from all those involved in their lives. This high level of support effectively addresses and meets the whole spectrum of their diverse and often highly complex needs. Parents and families, along with teaching staff and other professionals, continually praise the care and support that young people receive. One parent commented, 'The support is invaluable, it's a godsend. Nothing is unachievable. The young people love it, it's not about disability, it's about them spending time with their friends.'

Staff make sure that care planning is well-focused, individually tailored and highly effective. Young people's care plans describe comprehensively their needs, preferences and choices. Staff implement plans to support young people's learning and development exceptionally well. As a result of mindful and flexible introductory arrangements set up when young people move into the residential provision, they settle into their new environment with ease. Their transition to adulthood is managed sensitively and is celebrated as a graduation. Staff maximise opportunities effectively to develop young people's independence by supporting and helping to develop their living skills. All these efforts mean that young people grow in confidence, alongside acquiring new skills and values that prepare them for life after leaving school.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding young people and promoting their welfare are paramount for the young people while staying at the residential provision. Staff are effective in safeguarding practice and have a strong feeling of shared ownership to keep young people safe. Staff adopt a whole-school approach to understanding the importance of safeguarding, with each staff member taking personal ownership to remain vigilant. Staff take full responsibility for identifying risks online and in real life, and for protecting young people from those risks. When safeguarding incidents occur, partners work well together. Every aspect of the safeguarding procedures is understood, and clear decisions are made to protect young people. There are well-defined routes for reporting concerns that are appropriately shared at meetings. Staff practice is well-informed through training.

Behaviour management and risk management practices are robust, dynamic and highly effective. These minimise the risks and promote young people's safer behaviours. Young people have a varied range of complex needs which requires a number of different specialist approaches. These include specific health requirements, behavioural characteristics associated with their diagnosed disabilities, and bespoke communication needs. Residential staff understand fully young people's unique conditions and behaviours. Young people do not go missing from school. There have not been any physical interventions for many years. However, the system for recording physical interventions, should they occur, does not sufficiently allow for incidents to be reviewed in the necessary detail. This is an area of development which senior managers are due to review imminently.

The voices of young people are consistently heard. Young people's wishes and feelings are gained daily and recorded by staff in records and plans. However, the complaints procedure for young people has not been reviewed to make sure that it is suitable and age-appropriate, so that all young people can make an independent complaint without the support of an adult.

The school's environment is safe and well managed. Staff understand that health and safety considerations are of paramount importance for ensuring young people's safety. The leadership team ensures that procedures for the selection and vetting of all staff are rigorous. All staff are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks, and school leaders discuss and verify any gaps in employment with potential candidates. This rigorous practice promotes young people's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are inspirational, competent and influential in changing the lives of young people. They have created a culture of high expectations and advocate exceptionally well for young people. Leaders and managers model excellent professional behaviours. They have translated their vision very effectively into excellent practice. Young people are always treated with dignity, respect and

emotional warmth. Staff support effectively young people's identity by promoting the values of equality, diversity and inclusion in the school. School leaders and the head of care work together in their shared aspiration to make sure that the residential service continues to improve. The senior leadership team is committed to achieving and maintaining a high-quality residential provision that enables young people to thrive educationally, socially and physically.

Staff have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They work together well so that young people have memorable stays at the school's residential provision.

Governors receive regular and comprehensive information about the school and its residential provision. Governors have a clear oversight of the impact that the school has had on the outcomes for young people. Recent evaluative developments mean that the independent visitor's robust termly monitoring reports add value to the school's internal quality assurance processes.

Leaders and managers are realistic in their self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. With their history of outstanding judgements, they are not complacent and continue to look for ways to improve the service. Clear and focused improvement plans are used to strengthen the provision and develop it further. For example, an additional qualified nurse has recently been recruited to support the most complex young people.

The head of residential care is a valued member of the school's senior leadership team. This demonstrates the importance that the school attaches to its residential provision. The head of care leads a committed team whose members want the very best for each of the young people, and who continuously strives to break down the boundaries that young people face, whether this is in their emotional health or social relationships. She uses the support of the designated safeguarding lead to challenge other agencies when information is not available and escalates concerns when necessary.

The residential provision is managed very efficiently and effectively. High staff retention levels add to the young people's experience of consistency and stability. Duty roster records show that staffing levels are maintained at suitably high levels. Staff receive excellent management support, guidance and training. The residential provision is appropriately resourced to meet all aspects of its statement of purpose.

Leaders and managers apply a model of best practice by using research to inform staff practice, with a clear focus on the things that matter the most to young people. For example, managers use research to help staff to understand more about keeping young people safe, and to learn about the different ways communication can be used to make sure that every young person has a voice.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC043187

Headteacher: Mr Parry

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Lisa Walsh, social care inspector (lead)
Jo Stephenson, social care inspector



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