

Wennington Hall School

Wennington Hall School, Lodge Lane, Wennington, Lancaster LA2 8NS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

A local authority administers the school. The school provides an environment that can support 77 boys of secondary school age, from 11 years to 16 years, on a residential or day basis. Pupils using the services provided at the school have experienced some difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional or behavioural development. The school provides a 38-week programme of education with residential pupils spending weekends at home or with their carer. Pupils reside within five houses located in the school grounds.

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

inadequate

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 6 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Despite improvements being made since the last inspection, 13 national minimum standards remain unmet. These need to be complied with in order to improve the pupils' residential experiences.
- The local authority has not acted in a timely manner in relation to the leadership and management arrangements across the school and residential provision. Senior positions are not permanent and there are no succession plans in place for when the current managers move on.
- The governing body has been depleted by a number of resignations, which has resulted in weak oversight of performance at the school.
- Care plans do not identify specific targets for pupils to achieve and how outcomes for them are measured. In addition, pupils do not have access to the information written about them and they are not involved in the development or review of their plans.
- There are a number of agency staff working within the residential accommodation who do not have previous experience in this type of setting. They do not have a level 3 qualification.
- Staff do not receive supervision and team meetings are ineffective. This means that staff do not have an opportunity to reflect on their practice or have their well-intentioned ideas listened to.
- Considerable work has been completed since the last inspection to strengthen safeguarding practice. This has resulted in a better understanding of procedures by staff and ensures that pupils are kept safe. Safeguarding records are now clear about the actions taken to protect pupils. However, other important work is still needed to ensure improvement.
- There are omissions in many of the residential and administrative records. These records do not detail the actual action taken, or demonstrate managerial oversight. This means that the pupil's progress or areas of specific need are not identified. The monitoring and supervision of strangers on the site needs to be more robust.
- Staff embrace technology, although this has not been available to them for some considerable time. This includes no login access to online training. This prevents development and access to current legislation and guidance.
- Parent and carer views are variable that the experience of residential care has contributed significantly to their children's development. There is no system to seek the views of parents and carers electronically.
- Internal monitoring arrangements are weak and ineffective. When internal systems identify issues, they do not result in clear plans of action. Shortfalls in the independent person's reports are not acted upon.
- Planned systems to improve the residential provision need to be implemented and

need time to embed to test their effectiveness.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Pupils are happy and enjoy their residential experience. They now have well-established and trusting relationships with the residential staff. Peer relationships are well managed and generally positive.
- The staff have high aspirations for the pupils. They consider and demonstrate how they can consistently support them to reach their full potential.
- Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of activities, both on site and in the local community. They also benefit from experiences of travelling abroad. This increases their social interaction and self-esteem.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe in the residential settings. This is supported by their actions and conduct observed during the inspection that shows that they are comfortable in the company of staff. Collectively, they say that there are always staff around who will listen to them.
- All concerning safeguarding issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed. Actions and progress reports from multidisciplinary meetings have ensured that pupils are kept safe.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

- 3.12 Where necessary, a child has a clear individual health and welfare plan or similar record, containing relevant health and welfare information provided by parents/carers and recording significant health and welfare needs and issues. This record should be agreed by parents/carers and include: records of developmental checks; health monitoring required by staff; intimate care or bodily functions requiring staff help; and the involvement of a child's parents/carers or significant others in health and welfare issues.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.
- 13.3 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- 15.2 Records of staff working in the school demonstrate sufficient competent staff are deployed and that contingency plans are in place in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels.
- 19.1 Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school.
- 19.4 The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.
- 21.1 The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan

identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans.

- 22.1 Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors.
- 22.2 Each child's file includes the information in Appendix 2 (individual records).

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The pupils generally make good progress as a result of the care and support that they receive at the school. Pupils say that they enjoy their residential experiences. They progress in their self-care skills, communication and behaviour. They learn about communal living, sharing and respect as part of their residential stay. As a result, pupils develop acceptance and tolerance of others. This builds their resilience, self-esteem and confidence.

Pupils told the inspectors that they enjoy their experience and appeared happy throughout the inspection. Pupils told the inspectors that they are safe and they feel safe. They know whom to go to if they are not happy and feel that the staff listen to their concerns. One pupil told the inspector that he:

- likes the school and also the residential side
- gets on with the other boys most of the time
- says that the rules of the school are mainly fair
- enjoys the great activities, really likes the go-karts, buggy and bikes
- enjoys the food and that it is good most of the time and there is always something to eat on the residential side at night for supper and also for breakfast.

Other pupils commented.

- 'This room is really comfortable but I would like a clock or something in here so I know what time it is if I wake up in the night. The staff here are OK and I get on with my key worker. She bought some of the pet lambs in for us to see and I enjoyed that. I am really good at the go-karting and love banger racing so enjoy using the quad bikes.'
- 'I still like it here but there have been lots of changes in staff. I didn't know who all of them were and it was strange to start with. I'm getting used to them now though.'
- 'It really was a shock to see so many new faces [agency staff] and at first I did not like this. Everything is alright now and at least we know them and they are there when I need them.'
- 'I really like school; I have more friends here than I have at home. The food is really nice and there's always plenty of things for me to do; I never get bored.'

There has been a period of disruption as a result of the local authority not taking into account the impact of bringing seven new staff en masse into the service. This was reactionary following the last inspection and unsettled some pupils. However, pupils

have now formed trusting relationships with the staff who care for them.

The staff are consistent in their approach. They work well together to ensure that there is little antisocial behaviour or bullying. As a result, the pupils enjoy good relationships with one another. They are now benefiting from regular key-worker sessions and are being asked about the quality of service they receive. Records show that the staff act on the pupils' views.

Pupils enjoy and experience a wide range of exciting activities and are involved in some very good educational projects. Well-coordinated sporting fixtures are arranged, and there are also ample opportunities for them to experience outdoor activities, providing them with a range of activities. For example, motorised sports, educational and recreational trips, in-house arts and craft materials, cooking, design and musical opportunities are available to them. A group of pupils completed a project where they built a motorised vehicle and travelled to the United States of America to participate in a go-kart competition.

These activities and project engagement provide excellent social interaction opportunities and continuous learning of independence skills, in addition to providing lots of fun.

An end-of-term sports day was organised and took place on the last day of the inspection. The teacher who organised this was delayed in his attempts to travel back from abroad. There were no succession plans in place. The night before this was due to take place, pupils were unaware of which sporting activities they would be taking part in. However, the event did go ahead as planned and all of the pupils enjoyed the event.

There has been a lot of work completed following the last inspection. Regular meetings of professionals have ensured that more robust procedures are now in place to protect the pupils. These improvements are now in place and embedded into practice. However, the procedure for visitors entering the school grounds and school site was found to be weak and has the potential to place pupils at risk.

The quality of records within pupils' individual files, such as placement plans and behaviour support plans, is poor. These records do not identify the specific needs of some pupils and how best to meet these needs.

Care plans for young people are variable and were found to contain only the minimum amount of information to distinguish the basic care needs of pupils. Looked-after children documentation is not available for some pupils. This means that any plan of care agreed between the local authority, parents and carers is not known by the school. Similarly, there are shortfalls in pupils' healthcare plans. Arrangements are not in place to allow pupils to have access to the information written about them, or contribute to the development or review of their plans.

Improvements have been made following the last inspection for the administration

and arrangements for medication and these are now robust. There is now a clear medication policy and a regular internal audit procedure that has minimised the opportunity of medication errors. However, consent for the treatment of basic first aid and the administration of homely remedies has not been received from parents or carers. This means that staff do not have information available should a pupil be allergic or have a reaction to a particular type of medication. The practice identified during the last inspection in relation to the medical room being used as an extra bedroom has now ceased.

The school and the surrounding gardens are well maintained. They provide the pupils with space and privacy should they need this. However, the houses used for residential care have an institutional feel and are not personalised to individual pupils. More consideration should be taken to make pupils' bedrooms and environment more homely.

Five responses received by Ofsted from parents and carers during and after the inspection are variable. These include.

- 'School has taught my son skills which he has struggled to gain for most of his life. The staff are a credit to the school and all the pupils who attend. The communication between myself, my son and all the house/teaching staff is excellent. The opportunities that [X] has provided for my son is incredible.'
- 'My son started at the school [Year 7] in September 2016 – after the first few weeks, I had concerns that my son was being bullied. I visited the school in person to raise these concerns and I was completely overwhelmed by the school's response. The support I received from teachers was outstanding. They looked into this issue immediately, spoke to all the boys concerned and kept me informed on how my son was coping. From that day on, I've always felt that my boy is safe in their hands.'
- 'Communication regarding progress is scant. There needs to be more contact from teachers and staff. The leadership is very poor. Two headteachers in one academic year is very disruptive to the pupils.'
- 'Communication has gone down significantly. I don't get enough information about academic progress. Although I have used the school for five years, I only recognise a couple of the teachers. I would like a proper parents' evening/day to get feedback from them.'
- 'Our son's key worker is extremely thorough and has his best interests at heart. Nothing is ever too much for her. We are hoping with the appointment of a new headteacher the school can get back on track and continue to provide great foundations for many boys to come.'

Letters informing parents of the inspection were mailed out by staff. These were followed up by telephone calls. This is because the school does not have electronic addresses for parent and carers. Login access for staff has only been available from July 2017. Agency staff do not have login access.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The designated safeguarding lead at the school now has effective safeguarding records that detail any concerns relating to the welfare of the pupils. These records include concerns relating to allegations against staff. Following a succession of interventions by the local authority and safeguarding officer, staff now understand their roles in terms of protecting pupils. They utilise the child protection procedure effectively. The designated safeguarding lead reports appropriately to the local authority designated officer. The designated officer confirmed that this is now the case and that there are no current safeguarding concerns. Following allegations, safeguarding procedures are followed to ensure the safety of pupils and staff. Records now fully evidence the overall outcome of investigations and any impact on the pupil or staff member. Investigations are used to consider any learning from incidents and any improvement work completed to protect pupils.

Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe in the residential provision and school. They can identify staff whom they would go to if they were worried or upset. Staff have a sound understanding of child protection and their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding young people. Staff benefit from training to support their skills in identifying safeguarding concerns, including radicalisation and exploitation in all forms.

Improvements in risk assessment documentation are now evident. A new format has been implemented and completed. This now provides staff with all known risks posed by individual pupils. Strategies to manage risk are in place and ensure that a consistent approach is taken by all staff.

While behaviour is relatively settled, there has been a spike in the level of disruption and the number of physical interventions during the month of May 2017. This is attributed to the high numbers of staff starting work at the school, which had an initial negative impact on the pupils. Since the last inspection, permanent staff have completed behaviour management, de-escalation and safe restraint practice training. However, agency staff employed at the school in May 2017 are not scheduled to undertake this training until September 2017. This means that some staff are not sufficiently trained to manage pupils' challenging behaviours.

New sanctions have been discussed and agreed with the pupils. The restrictions on contact and the use of privilege rooms have stopped. Pupils individually and as a group have incentives through a points and rewards system, although not all of the pupils knew what the rewards would amount to at the end of term.

Incidents of pupils going missing from the residential accommodation are relatively low, and most instances occur within the school grounds. The records relating to two pupils, who were missing away from the grounds on separate occasions, do not show the date and time of return. While other records are completed appropriately, there is a lack of consistency and analysis within the missing incident records.

There are procedures in place to check visitors' identities and require them to sign in when arriving at the school. Part of the school site has been regularly used by the local parish group, who undertake bi-monthly meetings. The procedures in place to check visitors have never been applied to this group of people. This has the potential to leave pupils vulnerable to undesirable people. This was brought to the attention of the designated safeguarding lead and the local authority safeguarding officer. Swift action was taken during the inspection to improve this procedure and ensure that all visitors to the school are checked and supervised.

The staff vetting and selection process is good. The school's recruitment procedures help to ensure that suitable people are employed. Staff personnel records show that all necessary checks are completed, including checks on agency staff and correspond with the school's central record.

Comprehensive risk assessments and regular safety checks across the whole school site promote a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. Fire safety is paramount and there is regular testing of the school's fire safety system, firefighting equipment and regular fire drills.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Although 17 national minimum standards made at the last inspection have now been met, 13 have not been met. Improvements have not been made in relation to the 13 recommendations. Most of these recommendations are in relation to the leadership and management of the school and residential provision. As a result, the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers are inadequate.

The acting headteacher has been in post since September 2016 and is leaving at the end of term. A replacement acting headteacher is contracted for two terms and is scheduled to leave in April 2018. The current acting head of care and the acting deputy head of care commenced their roles on 5 June 2017 and these have been extended to the end of October 2017. The local authority has failed to recruit permanent leaders and managers. As a result, management arrangements have not improved the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school. Effective links are not in place between academic and residential staff.

Although the leaders and managers have high aspirations for making improvements to administrative systems and the quality of care provided to pupils, their plans are in the early stages of development. As a result, their enthusiasm to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the national minimum standards are met are unable to be judged for effectiveness at this inspection.

While some staff training has taken place following the last inspection, further training is not booked until later in 2017. Restricted access to electronic systems means that agency staff are not up to date with professional, legal and care practice developments. The learning and development programme has never been evaluated

for effectiveness. This means that pupils are cared for by a staff team where not all team members are suitably qualified, and by leaders who are unfamiliar with recent changes to inspection guidance.

Staff supervision has not taken place since the last inspection, formal annual appraisals have not taken place and team meetings are ineffective. There is no current or previous evidence of supervisions or formal appraisals taking place. The duration of weekly team meetings, for a large group of staff, is 30 minutes. As a result, staff performance is not effectively monitored, their reflection on practice does not take place and their good practice ideas are not being listened to. Empowering staff in their management, residential and academic roles must take place to improve the development of the school and the quality of care in the residential provision.

Staff personnel files are maintained in the school. There are now sufficient staff deployed, including additional waking watch staff. This provides pupils with extra security and confidence throughout the night. Pupils know that there is always a staff member available to them at any time, throughout the day and night. However, training certificates are sparse, there are no succession plans in place and not all staff are sufficiently competent. This is due to a lack of previous experience and training specifically in a school and residential setting.

The school's governing body has been significantly depleted. This follows a series of resignations and includes the independent person and the designated safeguarding governor. Following the last inspection, three monitoring visits have taken place. However, the actions needed for improvement in these monitoring reports have not been acted on. This is because there is not a system in place for senior managers to address the shortfalls in monitoring reports. Furthermore, the reports are brief and do not cover all of the issues specified in Appendix 3 of the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Over time, these failings have prevented improvements being made to improve the outcomes for pupils.

Each pupil using the residential service has their own individual file. The information is weak, duplicated and in some cases lacking content. Policies and procedures for pupils to have access to the information written about them are not in place. Individual files do not include all of the information in Appendix 2 (individual records), for example parental permission for medical and dental treatment, first aid, non-prescription medication, current and past placements or other plans relevant to them as individuals.

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 difference 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: SC035805

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Inspectors

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