

Wennington Hall School

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

Inspection dates

06/11/2017 to 07/11/2017

Context of the inspection

This monitoring inspection was carried out to look at the safety of young people who access the residential provision of the school after a whistle-blowing concern was received by Ofsted. It was also used to follow up the recommendations made at the last full inspection. Two social care regulatory inspectors carried out the inspection.

The inspection was aligned. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) for education and a social care compliance inspector (SCCI) carried out a monitoring visit to the school at the same time. This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The educational inspection outcome is contained in a separate report that will be published on Ofsted's website.

Inspectors observed the interactions between the pupils, school staff, care staff and leaders and managers. Inspectors joined the pupils at mealtimes. Inspectors visited the residential houses where pupils live when they stay at the school. Discussions took place between the inspectors and the leaders and managers in school, staff in the residential provision and the staff who care for the pupils.

The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school. The concerns raised in the whistle-blowing complaint received by Ofsted were considered alongside the national minimum standards. The social care inspectors, HMI and SCCI conclude that the safeguarding of pupils in the school and the residential provision is effective.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the full inspection on 17 July 2017, 13 national minimum standards were judged to be not met. Many of these related to the failure of the leaders and managers in the school and the residential provision. Progress has been made since the last inspection, in particular in relation to safeguarding, restraint and the health records of the pupils. However, other areas of progress have been poor. Following the last inspection, Ofsted has not received an action plan. The school action plan, which incorporates areas of improvement for the residential provision, has yet to be implemented and embedded into practice.

This inspection identified that 11 of the 13 national minimum standards made at the last inspection remain unmet; they have been made again at this monitoring visit.

Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they are concerned or worried. They confirmed that there is no bullying or intimidation, and that they are happy when in school and in the residential provision. Staff ably demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of what is required to keep the pupils safe. Staff have now completed additional training that explores risk factors and procedures to follow if a safeguarding concern is raised.

Leaders and managers have implemented new recording systems and procedures in the school. The child protection online monitoring system (CPOMS) is now embedded into practice. This enables clear recording and lines of enquiry to be passed on to the relevant agencies charged with protecting the pupils.

Designated safeguarding leaders responsible for managing safeguarding concerns possess the required knowledge and understanding, and work with the local safeguarding board and the designated officer in the local authority. This enables leaders to maintain their knowledge and understanding, and share relevant guidance with the teachers and care staff. Electronic records within the CPOMS system now clearly evidence that concerns are always recorded and referred within the required timescales. These arrangements underpin effective safeguarding practice.

Staff are now trained in the school's preferred approach to behaviour management. While physical intervention has been used in school and residential time, the numbers of these incidents are decreasing. Records for restraint are much clearer and show debriefs taking place for the pupils and the staff. Audit trails of physical intervention incidents are clear and daily meetings between teachers and care staff enable reflective practice and discussions about lessons that have been learned.

As a result, staff are aware of each pupil's presentation and behaviours. The staff use a wide variety of known strategies and techniques to distract, de-escalate and provide a safe environment. There is a good selection of activities to encourage pupils' participation and allow them to interact with each other in a non-confrontational way. Staff frequently reward the pupils' positive behaviour and achievements through lots of verbal praise, certificates, celebrations and prizes.

Pupils' health needs are now clearly identified and recorded. The pupils' health plans now have signed consent for the administration of basic first aid and administering prescribed and non-prescribed medication. There is good management of medicines in the school and the residential houses.

At the time of the last inspection, the school's governing body had been significantly depleted. There has not been any progress made towards having a sufficient number of governors to monitor the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the residential and welfare provision in the school. This means that the capacity to improve is being reduced.

Where leaders and managers demonstrate good skills appropriate to their roles, this is undermined, as leaders' and managers' roles remain on a temporary basis. The local authority has failed to permanently recruit a headteacher, a head of care or a deputy head of care. Delegated lines of accountability are not clearly defined and there is a significant lack of evidence of pupils' progress in the records kept for the residential provision.

Monitoring systems are weak. There are no clear lines of accountability so that all of the matters and records in relation to pupils, as described in the national minimum standards (Appendix 3), are being consistently monitored. There is no clear oversight to analyse and measure the pupils' progress.

Staffing numbers are sufficient in school and in the residential provision. However, 24 agency staff are employed in the school with 14 agency staff working in the residential provision. Some of these staff have had little or no experience of working in residential care. The high use of agency staff and the absence of careful monitoring do not ensure that the pupils receive continuity of care.

Furthermore, the pupils' needs have changed, with some requiring more specialist interventions to meet their mental health needs. While the headteacher has identified the need for training, in order to equip the staff with the necessary knowledge of how to meet the pupils' needs, this has yet to be completed. There is no effective evaluation of the learning and development programme in order to assess the staff's competencies or test that their skills are appropriate when looking after the pupils.

Not all staff have received regular supervision and staff appraisals have not been completed. Despite this deficit, the staff say that they feel more supported and that they have reacted positively to the numerous changes that have been put in place. The policies and business needs of the school, the residential provision and the website are in need of updating. This means that opportunities for the staff to address their practice and individual learning opportunities are limited, and that their knowledge of how to effectively respond to and meet the needs of the pupils is restricted.

There are no placement plans in place for the residential pupils. The absence of effective placement plans contributes to a failure to capture fully the progress that the pupils make in relation to their emotional, social and psychological well-being. Although there is anecdotal evidence of progress, this is not routinely recorded and does not inform learning or planning. Collectively, the pupils told the inspectors that they make progress in school and in the residential provision. One pupil stated, 'Considering what I used to be like, I have now completely turned my life around and this is because of the support I receive from the staff.'

The residential pupils' case files are disorderly and need attention. They do not contain all of the required information as required by the national minimum standards (Appendix 2). This means that plans and agreements between the school and the pupils' placing

authorities, parents or carers are not known by the residential staff, and that the monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' progress is not taking place.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools

- 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.
- 13.3 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 team

Mark Kersh
Sarah Oldham

Lead social care inspector
Social care inspector

Information about this school

A local authority administers the school. The school provides an environment that can support 80 boys of secondary school age, from 11 years to 16 years, on a residential or day basis. Currently, 33 pupils are using the residential provision. Pupils using the services provided at the school have experienced some difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional, psychological or behavioural development. The school provides a 38-week programme of education, with residential pupils spending weekends at home or with their parents or carers. Pupils reside within four houses that are located in the school grounds.

School details

Unique reference number	119873
Social care unique reference number	SC035805
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 boarding schools.

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	33
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Steele
Date of previous boarding inspection	17/07/2017
Telephone number	01524 221 333
Email address	head@wenningtonhall.lancs.sch.uk

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