

Welburn Hall School

Welburn Hall School, Welburn, Kirkbymoorside, York YO62 7HQ

Assurance visit

Information about this residential special school

This is a local authority maintained residential special school for boys and girls, aged eight to 19 years, with special educational needs. All students have an education, health and care plan.

There are 74 pupils on roll; of these, 24 students board Monday to Thursday. All boarding students are in the sixth form.

Students may have learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, physical disabilities, sensory impairment and/or medical conditions. Most of the residential accommodation is in the main house. There is a separate detached bungalow, which has been converted into two single-bedroom flats for students to practise independent living.

The school is set in grounds of 20 acres near the village of Welburn in North Yorkshire.

Visit dates: 7 to 8 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 11 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Inadequate

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Students enjoy boarding at this school. They have good friendships with each other and develop trusting relationships with members of staff. Parents said that they are happy with the quality of care their children receive. They believe that boarding at this school enhances their children's lives.

The boarding provision has remained open for students throughout the COVID-19 restrictions. Students maintain their routines, including continuing with their learning and being able to see their friends. This means that students have benefited socially and educationally by remaining in school throughout this period.

Student accommodation is much improved since the last full inspection. A refurbishment programme is underway. Students are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and most do so. As a result of the changes made, students stay in accommodation that is welcoming and provides them with home comforts.

Students develop their independence skills by boarding at this school. They learn or improve skills in cooking, self-care and planning for the future. Members of staff help students with their practical skills and support this learning in key-work sessions. Parents say that they are pleased with the increasing levels of independence their children achieve. Due to the approach of the staff team, students make progress from their starting points.

Members of staff use streamlined case recording to track students' progress and well-being. These systems help members of staff and leaders and managers to monitor students' attainment. This means that if students do not make expected progress, this is easily identified and can be addressed.

Students enjoy a wide range of activities. These include taking care of the animals in the on-site farm, riding bikes in the gardens and roller skating in the school hall. Two students set up a book club, which is very popular. Students are also able to have quiet time in their rooms, if they prefer. The variety of activities means there is something suitable for all students.

Students are actively involved in decision-making in the boarding provision. They take it in turns to chair their student forum and take pride in this role. One student said, 'This is our school, not theirs [staff], so it's right we are in charge of our meetings'. This opportunity helps students to learn useful negotiation skills and develop their sense of self-worth.

Members of staff help students to move into or leave the boarding provision successfully. Despite the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, leavers enjoyed celebrations that marked the end of their college experiences. Students who start to board for the first time are well prepared. Those who need to come into boarding quickly settle well, and adapt to their new routines. This is because of the individualised approach of the staff team.

The safety of children

Students are helped to stay safe within the boarding provision. Members of staff know students well. They use this knowledge to provide the necessary levels of supervision. Risk assessments identify students' potential vulnerabilities and detail the required actions for members of staff to follow to help to keep the students safe. However, risk assessments for sharing bedrooms do not include all potential risks. The residential manager has started to address this shortfall to make these risk assessments more purposeful.

Members of staff have good, up-to-date safeguarding knowledge. The staff team understands the impact on those students who live with trauma and neglect. One professional said that a student is happier in school than at home, as this is their 'safe place'.

The staff team has developed new skills in how safeguarding incidents are managed and recorded. Members of staff now emphasise the voice of the child in their recordings. This means that their responses to safeguarding concerns focus on the impact on the student, rather than on staff's actions.

Members of staff have high expectations of students' behaviour. Consistent, individualised boundaries are explained using students' different forms of communication. Members of staff focus on de-escalation techniques, which means that physical restraint is rarely needed. This approach to managing behaviour means that students are settled and have enjoyable experiences as boarders. Nevertheless, due to the ongoing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, some members of staff have yet to complete all components of the physical restraint training.

Leaders and managers

The newly appointed residential manager has made a significant impact on the boarding provision. The widespread changes he has made have given members of staff a clear framework within which to care for students. Members of staff are more confident and said that they feel more supported. As a result, students benefit from good-quality care that reflects their needs.

The residential manager has high expectations of the staff team. For example, he requires members of staff to know the national minimum standards for residential special schools. He sets a good example and acts as a role model to the staff team. As a result, members of staff work together to provide consistent care to students. Students have confidence in their carers and thrive because of this.

The residential manager monitors all aspects of the boarding provision. He acts on concerns and responds well to feedback. The residential manager also takes account of the independent visitor's recommendations. As well as improving the day-to-day experiences of students and staff, this demonstrates a learning culture.

The residential manager supervises all members of staff. He identifies practice issues and makes clear his expectations for improvement. Members of staff said that they value supervision and feel that they are making progress in their roles.

Recruitment has been successful and there is no longer a reliance on agency workers. This means that students are being cared for by a staff team.

An individual governor has now been identified to have responsibility for the boarding provision. She has visited the boarding provision and is getting to know the students, and demonstrates a good grasp of the most important issues affecting them.

The progress that was observed during the monitoring visit in May 2020 has been sustained and built upon. This is positive for students and staff.

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

National minimum standards

The school has sustained good progress and meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Points for improvement

- Risk assessments for room sharing to include pertinent risks arising from two students sharing one bedroom. (NMS 5.1)
- The school to resume training around physical intervention and continue to develop their recording practices as soon as it is safe to do so. (NMS 12.1)

Residential special school details

Unique reference number: SC007943

Headteacher: Marianne Best

Inspector

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector

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