

West Kirby Residential School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105137
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	308774
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Arif Hussain

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
6th form	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Wylie
Principal	Mr G Williams
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2004
School address	Meols Drive West Kirby Wirral Merseyside CH48 5DH
Telephone number	0151 6323201
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Age group	5–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a Special Educational Needs College for pupils and students with complex and significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many pupils also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including speech and language, autistic spectrum disorder and associated medical needs. All pupils have experienced major difficulties in mainstream and other educational settings and many have been excluded. All pupils are of White British heritage. The great majority are eligible for free school meals. Around 10% of pupils are in the care of local authorities. The school has residential provision for up to 30 pupils during weekdays, in term time. The school has a national award for information and communication technology (ICT), Arts Mark, Active Mark and the Enhanced National Healthy Schools Award. The most recent report on the residential provision may be obtained at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/report>.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school providing exceptional value for money. Representative views from parents include, 'We very much like the ethos of the school and its holistic approach to each individual child.' Although attainment on entry to the school is very low, achievement is outstanding, given the severity of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that pupils come to terms with their difficulties and develop very high levels of self-esteem, which had been eroded due to previous disengagement in education. Progress is excellent across the school because the quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers develop excellent relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour particularly well. Consequently, pupils settle into learning routines very quickly and develop realistic and high aspirations about their learning. Stimulating presentation of work in lessons captures pupils' interest and so they enjoy working hard. The rich and vibrant curriculum meets pupils' needs very well. Pupils enjoy especially the chances to learn through practical experiences. Many pupils gain a good number of external awards and national accreditations of subjects during their time at this school. A high proportion of pupils gain very good grades at full GCSE level including English, mathematics and science.

The school works very effectively with outside agencies to ensure pupils' welfare and there are excellent links with other schools and colleges. For instance, almost all students in the sixth form attend colleges regularly to undertake vocational training courses, including construction skills, animal care, office skills and hair and beauty. These factors contribute to students' excellent preparation for the future.

Personal development is outstanding. Parents are very pleased, saying, for example, 'The difference in my child is amazing. His independence, social and communication skills have improved and he is actually enjoying school for the first time in his life.' Behaviour is outstanding. Enjoyment of school life is reflected in excellent rates of attendance across the school. Pupils develop very strong attitudes towards leading healthy lifestyles. Participation in sports is very good and the establishment of better sports facilities since the last inspection is helping to channel pupils' energies positively. Pupils adopt safe practices well. Managers frequently review the procedures to ensure that pupils feel free of bullying or name-calling. Pupils' contribution to the community is excellent. The school council has made many good suggestions leading to school improvement, for instance, regarding school uniform.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The impact is seen in exceptional progress made by the vast majority of pupils in many areas of learning, in their sense of well-being and in the very good reputation the school has in the community. The Principal provides excellent leadership and together with a very effective senior leadership team ensures that the school remains a centre of excellence and that teaching is of the highest order. Governors have a firm grasp of educational matters and make an exceptional contribution to the school's work. For instance, governors have vigorously pursued improvements in accommodation and hold the school to account very effectively. The school knows its strengths and areas for development very well. The school was judged as outstanding at the last inspection. Improvements in key areas, most notably in the range of accredited courses on offer and better pass grades in subjects, demonstrate an outstanding capacity to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective in helping students to achieve as well as they can. Records of achievement show that Year 12 students and the very small number of Year 13 students make outstanding progress. The quality of teaching, curriculum and care offered are outstanding. Students become very good independent learners and rightly take great pride in their work. Personal development and well-being, including the capacity for future economic well-being, are excellent.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils respond very well to the warm and family feel of the provision. There is a high standard of care and child protection procedures are clear and effective. The single action point identified in the most recent inspection has been fully addressed. Leadership and management are very effective. School and residential managers work very well together to ensure the progress and well-being of boarders. The system to communicate pupils' personal difficulties and academic learning targets is a model of good practice. The residential curriculum is well planned and provides many opportunities for personal development. The National Minimum Standards for residential special schools are fully met.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Although standards are low because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achievement is outstanding. All pupils make equally impressive progress, regardless of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For instance, those with the most complex difficulties move forward in small steps but their achievements are just as outstanding as other pupils. The development of speaking and listening skills is often a strong focus in learning and so pupils make very good progress in these areas. Where necessary, the spoken word is accompanied by signing or the use of symbols, pictures and aids that enable pupils to understand and be understood. Pupils from Year 10 onwards gain a wide range of accreditation, with many doing particularly well. Accreditation includes basic life skills, personal finance, vocational skills, photography, English, mathematics and ICT. A significant proportion of pupils gain very good grades at entry and full GCSE levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development makes an excellent contribution to learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils mature very well and develop very strong values

about care, consideration, respect and fair play. In a discussion about prejudice pupils showed a remarkable insight into the damage and hurt this can cause to victims, including people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and minority ethnic groups. Comments included, 'Prejudice is one of the worst sides of human nature, it's wrong no matter what. I don't let it bother me: actually, I'm a better person because of prejudice as it makes me work harder and show how good I really am.' Pupils have a very good awareness of the diversity of cultures in society and appreciate the richness this brings to their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils and students make excellent progress and show very good attitudes to their work, as a result of very effective teaching. Teachers understand pupils' needs very well and how to fully engage them in lessons. Characteristic of teaching is excellent planning, matching work to the needs of different groups of pupils, teamwork between adults, pace and involvement of pupils in evaluating their work. A good example was seen in an English lesson where the teacher, speech and language therapist and teaching assistants combined their skills very effectively. Progress was excellent as pupils discussed popular characters in the media and talked about their values and feelings. Pupils responded very well to adults' questions and prompts. They were then spellbound as they watched videos and reflected on what characters were doing and why. Assessment is accurate, penetrating and insightful. Marking is good and teachers provide clear guidance in workbooks on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils enjoy the wide range of courses and activities provided by the school. They are secure and confident in their learning because the work they are offered builds strongly upon their prior experiences. Courses and activities are very carefully tailored to their individual capabilities and interests. The needs of higher achievers are exceptionally well met through additional courses, particularly in science and in art. Pupils and students with significant communication, social and emotional difficulties are given outstanding additional support so that they can benefit from all areas of the curriculum. Older pupils and students attend pre-vocational courses at local colleges that greatly improve their understanding of the world of work and help to secure their future economic well-being. Pupils' personal development, including their capacity to stay healthy and safe, is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils take full advantage of the rich programme of activities available outside the classroom.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Representative views from pupils include, 'I ran wild at my last school, but here I've grown up, matured and buckled down to my work because teachers have helped me to achieve things.' Excellent attendance and behaviour is promoted very effectively through rewards, which extend

to the boarding provision. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are clear and regularly reviewed. Pastoral and academic support and guidance is very effective. Pupils know which member of staff is acting as their personal mentor and are confident in approaching them about any problems. Speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and medical care are available daily in school and this also contributes to a very supportive environment where pupils reach challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school is successfully focused on maintaining excellent provisions and outcomes because leadership and management at all levels are very effective. Senior leaders have created a common sense of purpose among staff. Pupils' personal development and academic performance are monitored very closely and any problems are quickly identified and support put in place. Teaching is rigorously monitored to make sure that pupils continue to achieve as well as they can, and also that enjoyment, awareness of health and safety matters and preparation for the future is promoted at every opportunity. Managers evaluate their work particularly well and inspection judgements match the school's self-evaluation very closely. Inclusion lies at the heart of the school's work and the school is very effective in addressing individual barriers to learning. Resources are very well used to support learning. Improvements since the last inspection include ICT resources and much extension of the accommodation, which is lovingly maintained. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis with office staff making an excellent contribution.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school and for all your help during the inspection. I enjoyed talking with you and learning about your school. The school, post-16 and boarding provision are outstanding. This is because you make excellent progress. Your curriculum is super because there are so many chances for you to learn in the way you like. The school provides outstanding care, support and guidance. I was very pleased to talk with members of the school council and I am impressed by the suggestions made by pupils to improve things. I am also pleased to see the excellent contribution you all make to the community through taking up jobs around the school and in the residential provision. Personal development is outstanding. Well done! I can see that you are very well prepared for the future through the accreditations you achieve and the work-related experiences you take part in. Teaching and learning in your school is outstanding and you show very good attitudes to learning and your behaviour is excellent.

Leadership and management of your school and boarding provision are excellent. All staff are working very hard to make sure you carry on doing very well and, because they know just what needs to be done, I have not suggested any areas for development.

Once again, thank you for the welcome you gave me, it made my visit very enjoyable.