

Wendover House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110590
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325174
Inspection date	18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Gavin Thomas

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Wallis
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Morris
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2006
School address	Church Lane Wendover Aylesbury HP22 6NL
Telephone number	01296 622157
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This was a single integrated inspection of education and social care (welfare). Social care was inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000. An Additional Inspector and a Social Care Inspector carried out the inspection. The Additional Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the achievement of students compared with their starting points and learning targets
- how effectively teachers assess and record the students' small steps in learning
- the quality of the students' behaviour and the school's behaviour management, both in and out of lessons.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, the school's assessments of students' achievements and standards, behaviour management documentation, curriculum documents, the school's improvement planning, discussion with the headteacher and senior staff, subject leaders and students. Parents' responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The school provides day and boarding provision for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many of the students have additional needs such as moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or speech and language difficulties. There are 15 boarders. A significant number of students have had very poor attendance in previous schools. Many students enter the school with lower-than-average attainment, especially in literacy. Nearly all the students are of White-British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wendover House School provides its students with a good education. There is strong leadership by the headteacher. Teaching is good and an interesting curriculum provides students with new experiences both in school and out in the community. There are good opportunities for students to learn about the world of work.

The main reason for the school's success lies in the high-quality support and encouragement which students receive, as they gradually learn to value themselves and their learning achievements, after previous negative experiences of education in other schools. Many students enter Wendover House with challenging behaviour and a belief that schools have nothing to offer them. Staff at all levels know the students well because there is excellent communication throughout the school about each student's behavioural and emotional needs. This results in high levels of focused support for individual students, which may involve a wide range of agencies. The school's safeguarding procedures are secure. Students know what is expected of them within the school's calm and structured atmosphere and they make excellent progress over time in improving and controlling their behaviour. When students' behaviour becomes unacceptable, staff deal with incidents calmly and with understanding, and support the student involved.

The quality of this support, accompanied by the dedication of staff to 'go the extra mile' for each student, successfully underpins the students' improving achievement. The success of the school in engendering a spirit of mutual respect and above all in showing the boys that they have the potential for a successful future is reflected in the good rates of attendance by most students. The boys gradually change their negative perceptions of school and education and start to enjoy their learning. Parents confirm this enjoyment and have a high regard for the school.

The students' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong emphasis on moral and social values. The students understand very clearly what is expected from them because of their strong relationships with the adults, who provide good role models for them. There is also an exceptionally clear and effective points system, and students try their best to get the highest points they can each week. The students develop a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and of keeping themselves safe. They are considerate to each other and happy that bullying 'is not a problem here'. They make a very good contribution to the well-being of everyone at the school through the school council and because the staff regularly ask for their opinions on the quality of provision. The school takes positive and successful steps through its curriculum and pastoral support systems to promote community cohesion and students' understanding of cultural diversity. Students, for instance, play a role in the village community through work for the local church and in supporting elderly residents. They also gain a good understanding of wider cultural issues through the school's commitment to 'Eco-schools' and to raising funds for several Third World projects. Boarding provision is good with some outstanding features and has a very positive impact on the students' social skills and awareness. The students make good progress in basic skills and in well-organised work-related learning, which means that they are well prepared for when they leave at the end of Year 11. Almost all students go on to college courses or employment.

Boys may arrive at the school at any time of the year and at any stage in their secondary education. They usually enter the school with below-average attainment. As students gradually

gain confidence in their own ability as learners and develop positive attitudes to school, so their rates of achievement improve and they make good progress. By the time they leave, they have narrowed the gap between their attainment and that of students in mainstream education. Almost every boy leaves with GCSE qualifications in English, mathematics and science. In addition, many students gain further GCSE or entry-level qualifications. Students of all backgrounds and abilities get a fair deal. Those boys with additional needs such as autism or other learning difficulties make good progress through well-targeted support, sometimes learning in small specialised groups. Senior staff analyse and track the students' progress very effectively and there is no evidence of underachievement by any individual or group.

The curriculum is good and has many strong features. There is an appropriate emphasis on basic skills acquisition. As the boys reach Year 10, they embark on challenging GCSE syllabuses accompanied by a good range of vocational courses. Each student has the opportunity to follow vocational courses which lead to accreditation and most students leave school with extra qualifications in these. The school has developed well-regarded courses in painting and decorating and bricklaying, which are also successfully taught to students at the local upper school. The students grow their own produce during their market gardening course and sell it to local residents in a vocational 'enterprise' scheme. This range of experience helps students to gain good social skills and work habits and equips them well for college courses or training opportunities. There is also a good range of activities which takes them out of the classroom, showing them that new things can be learned in many different situations.

Teaching is good because the teachers know the students well and adapt learning activities to the abilities and interests of the learners. Senior staff rigorously monitor standards. The teachers plan and manage learning activities effectively and they ensure lessons proceed at a good pace, so maintaining the students' interest. There are high staffing levels and this ensures that the students always have access to individual support where necessary. This greatly enhances their confidence to try new things and to tackle challenging activities. The assessment of the small steps in students' progress is, however, inconsistent. As a result, the students' learning targets are sometimes not sufficiently challenging or focused clearly on each individual's learning needs. They do not help students to gain a clear understanding of their own progress or how to improve their work. This affects the standard of educational guidance which students receive and can slow down the pace of their learning.

The headteacher has provided strong leadership. Through his hard work and expertise, there has been steady improvement since the previous inspection. His senior team gives him good support. The school monitors its work effectively and leaders have a clear knowledge of what is working well and what could still be improved. As a result, there is a good capacity to make further improvement. Governance is good: the governing body provides appropriate challenge and support. The school is well managed. For instance, the multi-agency support for students is organised to a high standard. All staff feel that their contribution and opinions are valued, communication is excellent and there is high morale throughout the school.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The quality of boarding at Wendover House is good with some outstanding features. The school meets all of the key National Minimum Standards with very clear examples of how these are tailored to meet boarders' needs. The overall management structure is strong and the consistency of boarding staff enables boarders to establish safe relationships and a strong sense of inclusion. Written policies and procedural guidance are clearly set out and accessible, including adapted

formats suitable to boarders' levels of understanding. The recommendations from the previous inspection have all been fully implemented.

Boarders' health needs are met. This includes a whole school approach through the personal, social and health education programme. A qualified nurse is available to boarders and staff. The school actively promotes emotional well-being including input from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Boarders enjoy healthy lifestyles through structured play and activities.

Boarders enjoy a good selection of balanced and nutritious meals, and the quality and types of meals are influenced by the school council. Boarders say they are listened to and are pleased with the changes to the evening menu. Opportunities for developing boarders' knowledge about food and diet are imaginative and fun. This includes cultural nights and involvement in meal preparation.

Boarders feel safe and this is enhanced by the provision of a sleeping-in carer for each of the dormitories. Robust procedures are in place for promoting boarders' safety and protection. This is achieved through effective teamwork across the school, prompt communication and visits to families, and close liaison with external agencies. Staff are well trained in child protection and CCTV is now installed in key areas of the school for safeguarding purposes. The three dormitories are well supervised and prompt action is taken to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying. Extensive work is carried out in assisting boarders through difficult situations and helping them express their feelings and emotions more appropriately. The effectiveness of behavioural management systems is regularly reviewed. A recent initiative includes a pilot scheme combining key working with counselling. Physical intervention is rarely used in boarding. The use of sanctions is not unreasonable or excessive: it is clearly communicated to boarders and properly documented. Boarders respond well to the rewards and points system, which is well established throughout the school. Health and safety systems are well maintained, including fire safety procedures.

The boarding provision provides excellent support for education. The head of care is now working directly with education staff to enhance whole-school processes and to communicate the needs of students for both services. The learning opportunities during boarding hours are exceptional. Boarders participate in a wide range of activities, projects and voluntary work. This includes a combination of local, national and international schemes, together with social groups such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Boarders are consulted about the running of the school and boarding provision. Admissions and discharge procedures are comprehensive and handled with sensitivity. A transitional programme is being piloted for Year 11 students to return to school to carry out structured voluntary work and to gain recognised certification for their achievement.

Care planning and monitoring are effective. Care planning takes into account boarders' holistic needs, including pastoral care and emotional well-being, safeguarding, behavioural management, risk management and opportunities for developing independence skills.

The school is very supportive of contact with parents and significant others. Concerns regarding communication or relationships between boarders and their families are managed sensitively and with dignity. A strong network is in place for engaging parents with the school, including through home visits. Boarders have access to a payphone for making calls and facilities are available for private meetings.

Boarders are happy with their accommodation and there are no issues regarding intrusion of privacy. Boarders each have their own space within a dormitory, plus sufficient space for storage of personal effects.

Levels of staffing are consistent and ensure that relationships with boarders are not disrupted. Staff communicate effectively, for example at daily meetings. Staff are well managed and trained to meet boarders' needs. Procedures for supervising staff are efficient and include an annual appraisal. The head of care is suitably qualified and experienced.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This features prominently in the school's policies and procedures and significant work is undertaken in identifying and meeting boarders' diverse needs.

Leadership and management are effective throughout the school. Members of the management team are accessible and flexible in their approach. The school is dynamic and resourceful in developing practice and maintaining an environment which is safe, caring and purposeful. The governing body maintains a good system for monitoring the effectiveness of the service and outcomes for boarders.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers consistently record the small steps in students' learning.
- Raise achievement further by working closely with individual students to set suitably challenging learning targets which give clear guidance about how they can improve their work.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- The boarding provision meets all National Minimum Standards

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

02 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Wendover House School, Aylesbury, HP22 6NL

Not long ago I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom and in the dining room. I was only with you for one day, but that was long enough for me to realise that you go to a good school. I could see that you all enjoy school and that your behaviour has improved rapidly. These are the main strengths of the school.

- You work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your behaviour and personal development.
- You have a good range of activities, including interesting programmes to prepare you for when you go on to further education or training after you leave school.
- All the adults at the school have a real interest in your welfare and look after you very well.
- Lessons are interesting. This means you enjoy learning and do your best.
- Your school is well run.

The school could improve further in two ways.

- Your teachers should make sure they write down all the small improvements you make in your work.
- They should use this information to give you a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work.

You can help yourselves, too, by making sure your behaviour is always good and continuing to try as hard as you are doing in lessons.

Yours faithfully

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector