

Wells Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115450
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326197
Inspection date	27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Thompson HMI

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Joe Staines

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nick Kaye
Headteacher	Mr David Wood
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
School address	Lambourne Road Chigwell Essex IG7 6NN
Telephone number	02085026442
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a Social Care Inspector, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Wells Park School caters for primary aged pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All of the pupils have statements of special educational need. They have a wide range of abilities. Many have had their education interrupted due to poor attendance and/or exclusion prior to arriving at Wells Park. Pupils start at the school at various points throughout the year and may join the school in any primary year group. At the time of the inspection, pupils at the school were aged 6 - 11. They were nearly all boys from white British backgrounds. The pupils come from Essex, Thurrock and neighbouring London boroughs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support given by both education and care staff enables pupils to make excellent progress in improving their emotional well-being. This allows them to re-engage in learning and their personal development is excellent. Good teaching with additional help from residential care staff helps pupils make outstanding progress particularly in English and mathematics. The school is organised so that care and education staff share common goals for, and with, the pupils but have distinctly different roles in working towards achieving them. The same therapeutic principles underpin the relationships between staff and pupils across the day and residential provision. The pupils are very positive about the care and support and acknowledge the positive reasons for actions taken by staff. Nearly all parents responded to the questionnaire sent out by inspectors and they were unanimous in their praise for the school. The many comments included on the forms can be encapsulated by one parent who said that the school has helped her child 'accept and begin to cope with his differences, allowing him the same opportunities as any other child....the work will be far reaching for the rest of my son's life.'

Exceptional leadership ensures that there is a highly structured approach, implemented consistently in an extremely natural and enjoyable way. The school meets the stated aim that pupils will transfer the skills they gain when attending the school into their future placements and in other situations in their lives. There are many examples of pupils moving back into mainstream schools successfully. The curriculum is very well designed to meet the school's priority purpose but some subjects including information and communication technology (ICT) are not as well developed as English and mathematics. The pupils are very well aware of how they have improved since being at Wells Park and know the next steps they need to achieve in their behaviour and academically. All staff are highly committed to helping the pupils progress socially and emotionally as well as academically. They are supported in doing this by very well planned and targeted training run by the school.

The leadership team are very effective and the high level of challenge offered by the team approach and from the governors helps the school continue to improve. All areas for improvement suggested at previous education and social care inspections have been addressed in a thoughtful and highly effective way. Evaluation of the school is strong and concentrates on the progress and outcomes for the pupils. Changes are made to provision as a result. The appointment of the transition officer and the family worker are very good examples of this. Some of the systems for evaluation are not streamlined sufficiently so that staff and governors can easily determine at what level new initiatives improve progress and outcomes for pupils. The records of governor visits to the residential part of the school do not report on all the requirements. The school is aware that they make a very good contribution to community cohesion within the school and local areas but are aware they need to do more to help pupils develop a better understanding of wider national and international communities.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The quality of residential provision is outstanding, and the school meets all of the key National Minimum Standards. The quality of leadership and management of the school and the therapeutic approach towards relationships with pupils ensures the protection and promotion of pupils' welfare. The school's focus on the emotional well-being of pupils through clear

assessment and planning, and consistently implemented strategies including family work, enables and supports improved learning and social and behavioural abilities. All of the recommendations raised at the last inspection have been addressed despite the short time between the last welfare inspection and this integrated inspection. These, along with several other improvements made since the last welfare inspection have enhanced the boarding provision further and shows sustained improvement. Other improvements referred to include the appointment of a family worker; securing the services of an independent advocate and a qualified shiatsu therapist; improvements to the environment and the ongoing social projects tied into the work of the school council. The only area identified for improvement relates to the quality of monitoring undertaken by the governing body in relation to the school.

The provision for being healthy is outstanding. Children's physical and emotional health needs are thoroughly assessed and very good plans are produced detailing the measures the school has identified for how the individual child's needs are to be met. The school has been instrumental in accessing specialist resources for children where necessary, and works well with families to ensure transference of positive strategies developed during periods of residence at the school, to the home environment.

Children are kept safe by a combination of robust recruitment procedures, ensuring all staff who come into contact with children have been thoroughly vetted, and a clear and detailed set of child protection procedures and linked staff training. Child protection is taken very seriously by the school and members of the senior management team, who attend and fully contribute to all child protection strategy meetings relating to pupils from the school. Instances of bullying are low, and the behaviour management systems ensure the promotion of positive behaviour and mutual support amongst the group of residents.

Helping children enjoy and achieve is one of the key strengths of the boarding provision and is outstanding. The residential contribution to education is highly valued by the school and children receive outstanding levels of support from a well-trained staff team who consistently implement positive strategies and protocols for helping children manage education, when they have all found this problematic in previous educational placements. Parents who commented on their children's progress since joining the school describe staff as 'fantastic' and the help provided as 'invaluable.'

The provision for helping children make a positive contribution is outstanding. Children are at the heart of all decisions made at the school, and are regularly consulted about matters affecting their day to day lives at the school. Key-worker reports contribute to the annual reviews of educational need and these include detailed records of children's views. Children are fully involved in the completion of their individual social plans, which detail their goals and strategies for meeting assessed needs. The school has recently developed the role of the family worker and this, along with the ongoing work of key staff, has led to improvements to already very good family consultation.

The provision for equality and diversity is outstanding. The school ensures that diversity is celebrated within the boarding houses by special food nights and the promotion of positive images of diversity. The individual needs of each child are thoroughly assessed prior to admission to the school and individual social plans detail the measures the school has identified to meet the needs of children, including those related to cultural, religious and communication needs.

The provision for economic well-being is outstanding. Children live in well-decorated and pleasant accommodation. The environment of the boarding houses is clearly child friendly, with bright, cheerful colour schemes and large numbers of photographs, pictures and collages

reflecting happy activities, celebrations of children's achievements and the diverse range of personalities present within all of the houses. Bedrooms are personalised and communal facilities are well resourced and maintained to excellent levels of cleanliness and hygiene.

Organisation is outstanding. Children and families are provided with information in user-friendly formats about the way the school operates and the services it provides. The school uses slide shows and computer presentations, along with booklets in child-friendly language to describe the school and the way it works. Staffing levels are suitable and enable the needs of pupils to be exceptionally well met. Newly appointed staff are very well supported and undertake a comprehensive induction programme ensuring the philosophy and processes of the school are fully understood and implemented. The school has effective internal quality assurance and monitoring procedures, including the completion of regular reports on all aspects of the boarding provision. However, the reports produced by the governing body do not cover the matters identified in the National Minimum Standards and need developing in order to improve the robustness of external monitoring of the residential and care provision of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve curriculum planning so that teaching and learning in subjects other than English and mathematics can reach the same outstanding levels, this is particularly relevant for ICT.
- Streamline evaluation systems so that it is clearer which developments make the best contribution to improving pupils' progress and outcomes.
- Ensure that the reports of visits made by the governing body to monitor the performance of the school include evidence that all of the matters identified in National Minimum Standard 33 are undertaken.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils start at the school with levels much lower than that expected for their age. This is often due to lack of continuous education because pupils have found it difficult to access and learn in mainstream schools. Standards reached by pupils at the school are usually below national expectations due to their additional needs. Once at the school pupils make great strides in their learning. Expectations are high and the school is skilled at identifying the difference between pupils whose behavioural and emotional needs have been the main barrier to learning and pupils who also have additional learning difficulties. Individual targets set for pupils are based on making two levels of progress in English, mathematics, science and personal development over the key stage and many exceed this, making much more progress. Pupils with additional learning difficulties and those who are in public care make excellent progress. There are very few girls each year and they make similar rates of progress to boys starting at similar levels. Pupils' exceptional progress in reading, speaking and listening is well supported by time given to this in the residential setting. An example of the levels reached in speaking was how confidently pupils were able to speak in front of a large group, including visitors, in assembly. Pupils working at levels similar to that expected for their age make at least good progress but it is not always as exceptional as it is for some other groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' emotional well-being improves rapidly once they start at the school and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is based upon this firm foundation. Pupils learn

how to deal with a variety of difficult situations in socially acceptable ways. They rise to the high expectations of staff and they make very good choices about how to behave. In lessons, many are able to choose whether to work with each other or alone in order to concentrate and learn the most. During the inspection, there were some excellent examples of cooperative paired and group work where pupils had to negotiate and make decisions together. These social skills as well as the great improvements pupils make in their basic skills for literacy and numeracy ensures pupils are excellently prepared for their next placements. They have a very good start for building their future economic well-being. They value and enjoy their school and make an excellent contribution to improvements, especially by developing the environment. Nearly all pupils attend regularly and currently none has low attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are fun and engaging. Teachers know the pupils very well and use this information to make sure activities are motivating and matched at the right level for pupils with different abilities. Outstanding lessons are well planned and organised so that all staff are involved in promoting learning and pupils are engaged in a range of practical and written tasks providing opportunities for them to work cooperatively as well as on their own. Teachers make sure they use technically correct language and are skilled at helping pupils to understand these sometimes unfamiliar words. Pupils learn extremely well in these lessons. The pace of learning occasionally drops when groups work together for too long when taking turns, or when questions are not as challenging as they should be for some more able pupils. Pupils are very clear about what they are learning and know how to improve their work or how to seek help if they are unclear.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is extremely good for promoting pupils' personal development as well as improving skills in English and mathematics. Opportunities for promoting emotional understanding are maximised throughout the curriculum including activities offered in the residential setting. The curriculum is organised in a way which supports a personalised approach while making sure pupils gain a breadth of experiences. There are very good opportunities for physical education including swimming provided by specialist staff. The broad curriculum is planned to provide a good level of progression and continuity but staff expertise and resources do not always enable teachers to teach some subjects at the same consistently high level as English and mathematics. There are many additional enrichment opportunities for pupils provided by the school often supported by staff from the boarding houses.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Rigorous and early assessment of the care and educational needs of pupils when they arrive at the school helps staff develop suitable programmes to meet the different needs of pupils. Excellent training makes sure all staff from both care and education are consistent in the way they prioritise improving pupils' well-being, and the way in which this is implemented is exemplary. Staff offer excellent support that is highly sensitive, understated and personalised to pupils' needs. The school works extremely well with other professionals including mental

health professionals to provide additional intervention when required. There have been many successes and these include some very good work with parents so that pupils are supported in transferring their learning to the home environment. Examples include eating healthily, pupils' ability to continue involvement in sports as well as many successes in transferring improved social skills. The transition officer has made a significant difference to pupils particularly those in Year 6 who are anxious about imminent changes. The officer has helped to reduce anxieties so that behaviour does not deteriorate and has successfully supported pupils into their next placement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership is excellent. Improving pupils' rates of progress and subsequent outcomes leads all the developments at the school. Evaluation is rigorous and developments are well planned and implemented, although systems for measuring the impact of new initiatives on pupils' progress are not always streamlined enough. The governors are challenging and ask pertinent questions related to the progress pupils make while at the school. All leaders including the governors are acutely aware of the duties to ensure equality for all pupils and work extremely hard and effectively to make sure pupils who find themselves in the minority have the opportunities and experiences that they need. The local authority manages admissions to the school and the policy needs reviewing urgently so that it is adaptable when the balance of placements leaves very small numbers, or single girls without a peer group.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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	1

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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wells Park School, Chigwell, 1G7 6NN

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. We all think your school is excellent and below are some of the reasons why.

We are very impressed with how much progress you all make. You told us how much you enjoy attending Wells Park and that the school has helped you behave better and learn more. Many of you have not had such a happy time in your previous schools and we are very pleased that you now feel safe and happy which, in turn, helps you to learn better.

We think you learn to behave extremely well and cooperate with staff and each other. I was especially pleased to see so many of you working together in your lessons. You work hard because lessons are interesting and staff know you very well. They know how much you can do without help and I am happy that you all feel able to ask for help when you need it. I have asked staff to make sure all lessons are as interesting and as fun as the best ones and to give you more opportunities to use ICT.

The headteacher is always finding ways to make the school even better and we are glad you are now very involved in helping with this. I have asked him to work out easier ways to check how well things are working for you.

Joe was very pleased that you had pleasant boarding homes with lots of interesting activities. Joe has asked governors to make sure they report on all aspects after their visits to your boarding accommodation. We were also delighted that the school is helping you to use your new skills at home and to keep up some of the interests you develop.

Nearly all your parents sent in comments for us to read. They were pleased that you go to such an excellent school and were very proud of what you had achieved. All the staff are very pleased with how hard you work and they really enjoy working at Wells Park. So keep up the good work! We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson

Her Majesty's Inspector