

# Welburn Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121766
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	334896
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Honoree Gordon HMI

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

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<b>Boarding provision</b>	
<b>Social care URN</b>	
<b>Social care inspector</b>	Michael McCleave

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	41
Sixth form	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs P Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Coram
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	Kirkbymoorside York North Yorkshire YO62 7HQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01751 431 218
<b>Fax number</b>	01751 433 157

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Welburn hall is a residential special school located in a rural setting in North Yorkshire. Nearly half of the students are in the sixth form with the majority having joined at age 16 from other special schools.

Three quarters of the students are boarding students, though the boarding is flexibly arranged so not all are full boarders. All students have statements of special educational needs specifying the additional support that must be provided for them. Students have a wide range of additional needs, but typically these are moderate or severe learning difficulties, language and communication difficulties, autistic spectrum needs and attention deficit disorders. A number have physical or medical disabilities, including visual impairment.

The Primary Care Trust has facilities and specialist staff on site that contribute to the work of the school.

The school holds a number of awards recognising its provision: Healthy School, Sportsmark and Activemark. It has links with Norton College, a local secondary school, where students follow courses in science and in animal care.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Welburn Hall is a good school. Students enter the school with attainment that is well below average and with a wide range of special educational needs. The family atmosphere, interesting curriculum, good teaching and care combine successfully to help students make good progress in their learning and to grow significantly in self-esteem. As a result, students successfully obtain qualifications and gain places in further education. They leave as confident young people with good attitudes to learning. The sixth form is a particular area of strength. It helps young people develop the skills they will need as they move into adult life.

Students' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students' social skills improve noticeably over the time that they spend at the school and their behaviour is outstanding.

The school enjoys strong support from its parents. Students are well cared for, guided and supported. The promotion of their health and well-being is excellent.

The provision for boarding students is good and meets virtually all of the national minimum standards that are specified for care. Although close links operate between the boarding and educational aspects that are helpful for the day-to-day running of the school, there is no strategic overview or analysis of how effectively the two aspects, care and education, link up to promote the outcomes for children. This could inform planning for further improvement.

The school is well led and managed. As a result, outcomes for students are good. Swift action has been taken to address the points raised at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, in March 2009: the school now meets all the requirements for safeguarding and has completed all the requisite checks on staff. Improvements have been introduced to the systems for assessing students' progress. However, these have not yet been fully implemented. Governors have determined how they intend to become better informed about the work of the school. They are poised to take a more proactive, centre-stage role in monitoring how well the school is doing and in checking that all regulations and duties are met.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and is energetically and enthusiastically led. It comprises an independence education unit largely composed of students transferring from other mainstream schools who follow a curriculum aimed at promoting independence and easing transition into adult life. Students are residential in order to derive the maximum benefit. A smaller 'Moving On' section provides for existing students who wish to remain in school to reinforce their basic skills.

Relationships between the teacher in charge and the students and amongst students themselves are excellent. A relaxed, but purposeful atmosphere for learning results and students make good progress. A strong assessment system, with considerable elements of student self-assessment, tracks progress. All students gain places to continue in further education (FE).

The curriculum is good and is highly personalised. Students successfully develop skills for independent living, improve basic skills and gain nationally recognised accreditation in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). They learn useful skills for possible future employment. Through well-established links with local FE colleges, employers and a local secondary school, students all achieve qualifications in vocational subjects, for

example, in catering and in food hygiene; and in horticulture, and through an extensive gardening project at Helmsley walled garden nearby.

These opportunities broaden students' horizons beyond school and help to develop their social skills when working with other adults. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students' confidence grows significantly and it is this that they cite most often when asked what school has done for them. Students are happy and they enjoy the courses. One typical comment in a questionnaire summed it up, 'It's awesome here!'

## **Effectiveness of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Equality and diversity are taken into account in all aspects of work with the students.

The quality of boarding is good. The school meets all key national minimum standards and has complied with the recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection relating to documentation, missing person procedures and child protection training. There are no outstanding recommendations from that inspection.

Health care arrangements are good. Staff work closely with the nurse and are trained to administer medication. Students with particular health problems or a disability are provided with appropriate support in areas such as speech therapy and occupational therapy. This promotes their good health.

Students are given healthy meals, with choices at each mealtime and a vegetarian option; fruit is freely available. Catering staff are aware of students' likes and dislikes and have a good understanding of the needs of students who have religious or cultural specialist diets. The school participates in the local authority healthy eating campaign.

Staffing to support students' care needs is appropriate. Staff have good awareness of the importance of ensuring that confidential information is properly handled and correctly stored. This helps to keep students safe.

The current complaints information leaflet for students is not user-friendly. However, a new document is being designed that is more appropriate for their age and understanding and will enable them to indicate any concerns affecting their safety. The protection of students is given a high priority. Staff demonstrate very good awareness of child protection procedures. All staff receive child protection awareness training during their induction and when they complete the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3. However, updated training in safeguarding has not been available for a number of staff.

Students get on well together and the high staff ratio on duty each day generally precludes bullying. Nevertheless, staff are aware that bullying can occur and are confident that any incidents would be dealt with quickly.

Behaviour is outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. The school has reviewed the behaviour management policy and some care staff are to be trained as trainers on the 'Team Teach' approach, which emphasises de-escalation of tense situations.

There are risk assessments for all safety aspects, covering students' behaviour and organised activities. However, a number have not been recently reviewed and the school continues to use out-of-date forms. Fire drills take place as required and documentation is appropriately

completed, increasing awareness of the actions to take in the event of a fire and promoting the safety of staff and students.

Appropriate checks are carried out on all applicants for employment. No one is permitted to start their duties until full checks have been completed. Portability of Criminal Records Bureau checks are not now accepted at the school. Students' safety is positively promoted. These new procedures help to protect them from abuse.

Students' placement plans identify the support and resources required for their wide-ranging needs. Staff have an excellent understanding of the care needs of each student. Key workers have established good links with the support services that provide additional resources, such as speech therapy and occupational health.

Information flows on a daily basis between boarding staff and teachers, for example care staff attend morning briefings at the school. This close-knit team approach supports students in achieving their potential, both socially and educationally. Students see education as an integral part of daily routine.

Placement plans are reviewed annually. In addition to statutory reviews, the head of care monitors the progress and outcomes of the care plans, as part of the overall quality monitoring process. However, there is no strategic overview at a senior leadership level in school to evaluate how effectively the two aspects of provision, care and education impact on each other.

Formal consultation on boarding life takes place through the school council, which is consulted on a range of issues. No student is deemed unable to give their views. Some staff have learnt how to communicate with those who have sight or hearing impairment. This is good practice.

Admissions to boarding are carefully planned in a sensitive way and reflect good awareness of diversity issues. A similarly careful approach is taken towards planning for when young people leave.

Students can maintain contact with their families by telephone or by using the school's computers for email. This ensures that students settle quickly and feel more at ease.

Although housed in an old listed building, the boarding accommodation is well equipped with suitable aids and adaptations to enable students to enjoy life in the boarding house. The standard of accommodation is good and students can have a single room or space within a dormitory. There is sufficient space to enable those who use wheelchairs to move around the school freely.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out the care that will be provided. The governing body reviews this statement annually.

Staff have a professional approach to their work and the team has a good spread of experience. Staffing ratios are good, with an equitable gender balance, ensuring that students are appropriately supervised and helping to keep them safe.

Staff are trained in safeguarding, first aid, food hygiene and behaviour management. All care staff are expected to work towards the NVQ at Level 3. The head of care currently does not have a management qualification, but is now registered for NVQ at Level 4 in management.

The management team monitors reports from staff on the progress made against the care plan and analyses the work being undertaken with each child. As yet, information about academic progress feeding into this is insufficiently detailed. Case records are stored confidentially and

only accessed by authorised staff. A new case-file recording system is currently being introduced to allow easy access to information.

There is a positive ethos of mutual respect in the school. This, together with good leadership and management, ensures that students' welfare and overall development are promoted.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Implement fully the new systems for tracking students' progress so that an accurate picture of this may be determined.
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation role of governors to be able to demonstrate how all duties and responsibilities are fulfilled; and to be better informed regarding the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Evaluate how well the total provision, for care and education together, promotes the outcomes for students and how this may influence school planning, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant to students' needs and promotes high quality personal development and academic progress.

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

Recommendations:

- Ensure there is training for all staff in the prevention and recognition of abuse, dealing with disclosures or suspicions of abuse and the school's child protection procedures (NMS 5.8).
- Ensure risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated (NMS 26.3).

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' achievement is good overall from their various starting points, though their standards remain low. By the time they leave the sixth form a few students have reached standards that are more broadly average. Students make good progress in lessons. For some, progress is more limited due to the severe nature of their difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, when these affect concentration or the extent of their contribution orally to lessons, but all make at least satisfactory progress.

Often, students make small steps in progress in lessons. Some make sufficient improvements in literacy to be able to read independently for pleasure. With the aid of ICT for writing, students express their views and use their imagination to the full in creative writing.

All students progress sufficiently well to successfully obtain nationally recognised qualifications by the end of Year 11. More able students gain GCSE or equivalent. Students' achievement is particularly good in their personal development. The good progress that students make is directly related to good teaching, suitable resources and a good curriculum that promotes enjoyment. All students have gained places in 2008 and 2009 on further education courses at the end of sixth form.

The school tracking system is beginning to show students' progress more clearly now. Some work is ongoing on correctly judging levels and comparing these to get consistency across subjects. The school reached its targets for individual student progress, but the new system aims to make the process of target-setting more accurate.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good. Their social skills develop particularly well. Students follow a programme of personal, social and health education that includes specific aspects aimed at promoting their emotional well-being. In this small school students are valued and known. They grow in self-esteem and this translates into excellent attitudes to learning. Attendance is excellent.

Students are friendly and are keen to assist each other. Behaviour is outstanding: there is no absconding, and few sanctions ever needed. As a result, there is a very productive, calm, relaxed learning atmosphere. Teachers are skilled at managing behaviour and so spot when it is appropriate to intervene to keep students motivated. They provide good role models for the students in cooperative behaviour. Relationships are strong, 'They help you learn', said students.

Many activities are designed to promote social skills, for example trips out of school, or to promote health, such as the structured exercise programme at the start of the day. Students have immediate access to the play, garden and games areas in the school grounds and activities in the adjacent countryside. Provision for healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Students learn about the importance of healthy eating and have plenty of opportunities for exercise. Learning about food is fully integrated across all aspects of school life, education, boarding, kitchen and school meal- planning, and a cottage garden where students grow fresh produce.

Students have good opportunities to express their views on aspects of school life, for example through a school council. Day students frequently participate in after-school activities with boarders as part of an extended school day to further extend their enjoyment of school and to promote friendships.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Class sizes are very small and so students receive a great deal of individual help. Teachers plan imaginative lessons that meet students' needs well. Teachers and assistants work very closely together in preparing suitable lessons that meet the wide range of needs within any one class. They work very effectively together in the lessons to ensure that students do their best and can make good progress. Both teachers and assistants are highly adept at keeping students focused and in moving the learning on, for example through skilful questioning at appropriate points. The school fosters this team working well through joint training.

The tasks that students are asked to do are differentiated appropriately through group work, the setting of different tasks or by extension work, such as observed in a good Key Stage 3 numeracy lesson for a more able student who showed particular aptitude.

Wherever possible, lessons include practical activities to help students maintain concentration and promote understanding, backed up by good resources. Good use is made of ICT to provide clear explanations of new work, to suit students' varied learning styles, and to help them draft written work, express ideas, practise skills and research into topics. These features bring the curriculum alive and so it is no surprise that students say that they enjoy school.



Teachers formally assess students' progress at the end of the school year, but are increasingly exploring ways of recording the smaller steps students make in between. The school is taking this action to ensure that more accurate targets can then be set for all subjects. In some subjects, for example in catering and food technology, such regular assessment practice is well established and students contribute to the process.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and it meets the needs of the students well. All students follow the National Curriculum, with an appropriate emphasis on developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is differentiated well to suit the wide range of students' abilities, for example through the provision of extra support in lessons to help individuals work at a pace that suits them best, or through setting different tasks to be done in small groups or pairs. In this way, students are able to make good progress. Students benefit from good links with a local secondary school for practical science and for lessons in animal care.

There are good opportunities for students to gain accreditation for their learning and to develop useful skills for future employment or training, for example qualifications in catering and hygiene.

Extra-curricular opportunities are a particular strength and source of enjoyment. Students enthusiastically described their roles in the school drama production 'George and the Dragon', which was in the final stages of rehearsal at the time of the inspection. A gardening club, ICT club, horse riding and outdoor activities enhance the curriculum further. Trips out of school introduce students to the theatre and to their local area. Day students join in the extended day with boarders.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Students receive good care, guidance and support. The school's small size and the high quality of relationships between staff and students are major factors underpinning this. Students are closely supervised at all times.

Specialist therapists and facilities on site such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy and a hydrotherapy pool, a school nurse and links to other services when required, allow for the needs of students with physical disabilities or communication difficulties to be met. Additional guidance is provided to teaching staff on strategies to use in lessons to support individual students.

There are good links between the two aspects, care and education. Regular communications and weekly meetings between care team leaders and teaching assistants ensure that information is shared to help in planning lessons and in promoting students' well-being. All students have a nominated key worker who knows them well and who can facilitate this interchange. Students complete a daily diary that goes home or with them into the boarding section. Though these systems are effective in delivering both curriculum and care, there is no strategic overview of how the two aspects fit together, whether this meets the changing needs of the students and whether there might be any gaps in provision.

Students have personal targets in their care plans or statements and contribute their views to annual review. School-wide and individual academic targets are set, but these are not included in care plans. Recent improvements have been introduced to the systems for tracking progress

that show more clearly the small steps students make and whether they are on track, or not, to progress as the school expects. These systems are new and, as yet, do not provide a full picture of progress over time. However, twice-annual assessments of progress in core subjects, ICT and personal development have begun to feed into this.

There are good procedures for settling students into school and for their transition when leaving.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Outcomes for the students are good. The headteacher has taken effective steps since the previous inspection in March 2009 to promote improvement. Recent changes to policies and procedures reflect greater urgency and some impact of these changes is already evident. This swift action, together with an honest and reliable self-evaluation recognising the next steps it needs to take, indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

The school's self-evaluation shows that the headteacher and senior leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Middle leaders understand the new system for tracking students' progress and are keen to implement this further. Teachers' lessons plans meet students' different needs better than before. There are increasing opportunities for the professional development of teachers and assistants aimed at meeting the more complex needs of the students. These include studying for further, specialised qualifications and links with other schools to promote good practice.

An appropriate development plan is being implemented. The school is taking a more robust approach to safeguarding than at the time of the previous inspection and now meets all the requirements regarding safeguarding and recruitment checks, including a check with the Criminal Records Bureau. Other records and procedures, such as for risk assessments, meet requirements but typically require updating. As opportunities arise for new appointments at a managerial level these are being used to strengthen monitoring and evaluation in the school.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors support the school well but recognise that they need to be more proactive in challenging and holding the school to account. To this end, a review day held in June 2009 resulted in a definitive set of priorities to drive this forward, with clear timescales and responsibilities. The promotion of community cohesion is good: students are active in their school and links with the local community are strong. Students learn about other cultures and contribute through fundraising for national and international charities.

Links with the Primary Care Trust work well, to enhance the support and care that is provided for the students and their families. The school enjoys strong support from its parents. There were many glowing comments in the questionnaire responses from parents, such as, 'Staff have an overarching concern for the well-being of the whole child, not just an academic focus; we feel very lucky our son has a place at Welburn Hall.'

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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	16-19
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
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?	2	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<sup>1</sup>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.

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
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	3	
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	

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

I am writing to thank you for all your help when I came to inspect your school recently, with Mr Mc Cleave, and to tell you what we think about your school.

It was good to talk to you. You told us how much you enjoy being at Welburn Hall. You said that the teachers and the care staff look after you well and help you to learn. You said you feel more confident in being able to do things because of this.

We completely agree with you. We think Welburn Hall is a good school. That includes the boarding section. Your headteacher Mr Coram leads the school well and it has got better since inspectors last came in, in March this year.

Here is what we found:

- Teaching is good. Your teachers and assistants make your lessons exciting.
- You try really hard in the lessons and you are making good progress.
- Your behaviour is super! Well done!
- You are kind to one another and I can see how your confidence is growing.
- All the staff care for you really well.
- The school provides lots of interesting things for you to do, and you can get useful qualifications to help towards a job or a college place.
- The school is good at helping you learn useful skills for when you grow up and leave school.
- The catering and food courses are really good. The school is very keen about you keeping healthy, eating well and taking exercise.
- The independent education unit (IEU) for the older students is good. It gives you good opportunities to get out and learn new skills, learn about working and meet new people.
- You do really well in getting places at college after school.

I have asked Mr Coram to keep a close eye on how you are doing in all your subjects and to be sure that the paperwork he and the governors do is always kept up to date. I have asked him also to look at how the two parts of the school, boarding and lessons fit together. That will help him when he makes decisions and plans that affect you.

I remember you telling me all about the play 'George and the Dragon' that you were practising for. I hope the performances went off well and that you had fun.