

Wilds Lodge School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Peter McKenzie AI
Social care inspector	Joanne Vyas

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000³ having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

Information about the school

Wilds Lodge School is a residential and day special school which makes provision for up to 65 boys aged between seven and 16 years of age. The school opened in January 2007 and there are currently 60 pupils on the roll of the school aged between seven and 16, of whom 51 are boarders. All the pupils have a statement of special educational need to address their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Over half the pupils have additional learning difficulties and one in ten is looked after by his local authority. The school is situated on two large rural sites with very attractive buildings and grounds near Rutland Water. The second site opened in April 2010 and, in addition to facilities for physical education, science and art, will become the vocational centre for the school. The school places an equal emphasis on the educational, social and psychological development of the pupils which includes a therapeutic approach to education. It aims to create a positive climate for learning with high standards of education and care, so that pupils feel safe and secure and reach their full potential. The school was last inspected in July 2007 and had a social care inspection in November 2009.

Evaluation of the school

Wilds Lodge School provides its pupils with outstanding education and care. They make outstanding progress in both education and personal development because of the combined impact of the whole range of the school's provision. They live and learn in a stimulating environment which they learn to respect and enjoy. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and now meets all the regulations. Parents overwhelmingly support the school. One parent said, '[This] excellent school has given my son education, self-esteem and to us as a family, an excellent life.'

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. Wilds Lodge School provides its pupils with an outstanding range of opportunities, which fully meet the pupils' needs as outlined in their statements. A particular strength is the individual support provided for improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the primary phase and in the early secondary years, pupils follow the pattern of the National Curriculum and benefit from the emphasis on core subjects. From Year 10, the curriculum is more individualised and the school provides a wide range of award bearing courses including, GCSE, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), Business and Technology Education Council (BTec), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Level 1 and 2, and Entry Level accreditation including partnerships with local colleges. The building development on the Crossroads site will shortly enable the school to offer more of this vocational provision in its own premises. Careers guidance is valued by pupils and is delivered through Connexions staff in both Rutland and the pupil's home area. Pupils' personal development is assured through the high quality personal, social, and health education (PSHE) programme which complements the 24 hour care and education programmes in the school. Extra-curricular provision includes residential, sport, music, community service, outdoor pursuits and much more.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Lessons are thoroughly planned and make good use of the available resources, including excellent provision in information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching is highly challenging and engages pupils who willingly co-operate in activities and discussions. Independent and group learning is a significant strength of the school and is characterised by a culture of support in the classroom, not only from the excellent teaching assistants but also from pupil to pupil. Teaching is based on outstanding relationships and teachers' knowledge of pupils' prior attainment. Targets are set and fully evaluated in lessons. Objectives and tasks are matched to the range of pupils' abilities. Pupils understand what they are to do and how to succeed. Pupils themselves take part in evaluating their success in lessons and they are highly praised on the basis of personal progress. Assessment is used very effectively for lesson planning and to motivate pupils, who all have detailed individual progress files. However, the analysis of this information to produce a whole school view of progress is less well developed.

Pupils make outstanding progress during their time at Wilds Lodge. Progress judged against the school's aims to equip pupils to improve social behaviour is outstanding and fits pupils for a better learning experience than they have previously encountered. Academic progress is also outstanding overall. Most pupils enter the school with low standards, their progress having been adversely affected by behavioural difficulties and in some cases an extended period out of school. The range of attainment is broad, ranging from those with additional learning needs to some pupils able to work at or above the national expectations. The school works hard to create a learning atmosphere by a combination of care and reward. From a range of starting and finishing points, pupils' progress continues to improve rapidly. Predicted GCSE grades show that pupils have made outstanding progress in mathematics from well below the expected level for those leaving primary school in

Year 9 to GCSE pass grades in Year 11. Progress in mathematics in two years to Year 9 is similarly outstanding. In English, pupils make good progress overall, particularly in writing, and significant improvement in Years 8 and 9 results in the highest attainers exceeding the national expectation. Work seen in the classroom in literacy is outstanding in speaking and listening because pupils have confidence, good imagination and develop themes creatively. Pupils comment that it is hard to make progress in core subjects but appreciate the help they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's emphasis on honesty is reflected in the actions of its pupils. They develop responsibility for their actions and the impact on others. They show themselves to be caring and supportive to each other in their work and leisure activities. They appreciate trust for example: 'Life skills are important. They let you go into town alone,' commented one pupil.

Their care extends to that of the extensive wildlife around the school. Year 9 pupils are helping to hand-rear a group of new-born rabbits found in the grounds. They also look after young ducklings. The school has a significant impact on the moral development of pupils. They understand and appreciate the focus on honesty and respect the wonderful school environment. They value the help of adults and support local and national charities, taking an active interest in the people they support, such as those needing eye care in India.

Pupils live and work together as a community which for most of them is a 24-hour experience. They take a full part in a twice daily 'handover' meeting to link together their care and education. Preparation for work and further education is a strong element of the school's work through core skills, work experience and careers guidance. Pupils were enthusiastic and proud of the work they had done improving the facilities at a wildlife trust. Through the PSHE programme, they prepare effectively for their role as citizens and develop an understanding of the world around them. They live and work harmoniously with people from other cultures and faiths. Attendance and punctuality are good and reflect pupils' commitment to their work. Behaviour is good, a further testimony to the effectiveness of the school's success in guiding pupils to value their opportunities.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils within its educational provision. Although three of the national minimum standards relating to the boarding are not met, these aspects do not affect the judgements relating to school. The school's effective therapeutic approach and the work of the four counsellors play a significant role in the pupils' emotional health and demonstrate the strong links between care and education. Staff regularly attend care meetings and strive to know pupils well. Pupils are referred to therapists when they

are secure in the school environment but can self-refer if they feel the need. However, immediate problems are usually readily resolved by the pastoral staff and the pupils are appreciative of all this support: As one commented, 'We feel safe because we have adults around us. We have boundaries; we have people who push the boundaries.' Pupils understand healthy eating through the excellent provision in school and enjoy the healthy food provided. They also understand that occasional departures from the healthiest food are acceptable. They eat fruit and vegetables as a basic part of the diet. They understand the role of exercise in staying healthy and take part in two long physical education sessions each week as well as a whole range of sporting opportunities including football, cricket, dodge ball, swimming, cycling, walking, ten-pin bowling, table tennis and outdoor pursuits including kayaking, raft-building, orienteering and fishing. Pupils are aware of safe practices around the site. Risk assessment is thorough including travel between sites and to other off-site activities. Supervision on both school sites is based on a friendly presence of adults. Pupils are given responsibility and learn how to accept it. Policy and practice on health and safety, fire safety and first aid provision fully meet the regulations. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 to provide a three year plan to provide access for the disabled.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully meets the regulations including appropriate checks on all staff, volunteers, contractors and others of their suitability to work with children. These are appropriately recorded on a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises provide truly inspirational accommodation for its work, both within the building and throughout the immaculately maintained grounds. High quality accommodation based on thoughtful design is safe and secure, fully meets the needs of the curriculum, and earns the respect of the pupils. Teaching accommodation is well maintained and cared for and includes specialist rooms for science, technology, music and outstanding physical education facilities which allow pupils to learn very effectively.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The information of information for parents, carers and others meet requirements except that the contact address for the proprietor is not clearly stated.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for handling complaints fully meet the regulations.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of the boarding is outstanding. The majority of the national minimum standards are met, with a significant number exceeded. The school has taken appropriate action to address the recommendations contained in the previous report. These included recommendations regarding recruitment procedures, medication procedures and records of behaviour management, although some of these need further improvement.

This school currently provides boarding for 51 pupils. Pupils board on a full-time basis, going home at least one weekend in two and every school holiday.

The school's ethos and underpinning philosophy are strong throughout, ensuring pupils who board are in a supportive and caring community within which they are valued and safe. Boarders develop good relationships with each other and with staff. They enjoy boarding.

Staff actively promote the health of boarders. They are suitably trained in first aid and accidents are few and far between. Staff have satisfactory procedures for the safe management of medication and have received training. However, some medication comes into the school without its original packaging. This is potentially unsafe practice as there is no pharmacy label identifying the medication or stating the dosage and frequency of administration. Additionally, homely remedies are not stored in a locked cupboard, although they are in a locked office. The school has a therapy team which includes a psychologist, psychotherapist and counsellors who work in partnership with care, education and parents to promote the emotional health of pupils. There are lots of opportunities for boarders to take part in physical activities and the school has excellent facilities for this including playing fields and a new well-equipped sports hall. The school provides a varied diet which caters for individual needs. Boarders have an active say in what goes on the menu, food is sourced locally and meals are cooked from fresh ingredients. The school has themed days which are reflected in the menu such as The African Sight Day, Chinese New Year and Spanish Day. Boarders enjoy the plentiful healthy food.

The safety and rights of both staff and boarders are protected. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures. Boarders are confident about who to talk to and what to do if they are unhappy. Boarders said staff are good at listening. Staff take their concerns seriously and resolve issues where possible. The privacy of boarders is respected. Staff have a good knowledge of the bullying policy and bullying is dealt with immediately. Staff carry out work with boarders to help them understand and accept difference, encourage honesty and look at underlying causes for bullying so that pupils can be supported. Staff know what to do if pupils go missing but this has not occurred since the school has opened. Staff believe this is because pupils are happy. The school's recruitment procedures are robust, ensuring all safety checks are carried out. All visitors sign in

to the school and must show identification. There are good health and safety procedures in place.

Staff view pupils positively and there is a relaxed, family atmosphere in boarding. Boarding staff have all received training in physical intervention but rarely use it. Staff said they prefer to talk to the pupil helping them to calm down. Physical intervention is carried out for the right reasons but is not always well recorded and these records are not overseen by a senior member of staff. Boarders know the rules and said they are fair. Challenging behaviour is managed competently and professionally. Pupils are encouraged to be honest and take responsibility for their actions. Older pupils are encouraged to lead by example. Pupils were polite and helpful throughout the inspection.

Individual support is detailed in each boarder's file. Observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each boarder's individual needs and aspirations are fully addressed.

Staff work in partnership with education and therapy as well as parents to provide a positive approach to education and promote its value for boarders. Boarders are provided with good support for work experience and to move on to college. Staff provide significant opportunities for boarders to present their views, make choices and decisions. There is an active school council and boarders know who their council representative is.

Boarders are accommodated within one of four houses, one of which is on a separate site called Crossroads. They live in a homely environment with high quality furnishings. There is a large amount of communal space. They have excellent facilities. Their bedrooms are personalised and they can personalise communal areas if they wish and examples of cultural choices are evident. The home is spotlessly clean and tidy and highly maintained. Boarders value their home and their surroundings.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Staff work in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of boarders.

The school leadership team has a strong commitment to improving practice and ensuring the quality of the service provided. Staff are qualified, caring, professional and extremely competent. They feel well supported by each other and the school leadership team. There is a clear induction process for new staff, which includes guidance on safeguarding procedures as well as other school policies and procedures. Staffing levels enable staff to meet the needs of the boarders. Boys said that the best things about boarding are that 'staff support you, treat you fairly and you feel safe.' They say they would not change anything.

National minimum standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

Breach of NMS 14.17:

ensure there is a policy and written guidance which is implemented in practice for the administration and storage of medication. This specifically refers to the security of homely remedies and medication received from parents which is not in its original packaging

Breach of NMS 10.14:

ensure that the central record for positive handling is fully completed

Breach of NMS 10.16:

ensure there is review both of the care of individual children and the school's current care practice in the light of the recorded incidence and pattern of incidents requiring physical intervention and that comments are recorded on the appropriateness of individual uses of physical intervention, together with subsequent action taken.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6(2)(b)) and must:

- ensure that the school's address for contacting the proprietor is clearly indicated.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- maintain whole school summary of assessment and progress data.
- ensure that it meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision	✓			
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School details

Name of school	Wilds Lodge School
DCSF number	857/6005
Unique reference number (URN)	134938
Type of school	Independent
Status	Residential special school
Date school opened	18 January 2007
Age range of pupils	7-16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 60 Girls: Total: 60
Number of boarders	Boys: 51 Girls: Total: 51
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 60 Girls: Total: 60
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 7 Girls: Total: 7
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£80,000
Address of school	Stamford Road Empingham Oakham LE15 8QQ
Telephone number	01780 767254
Fax number	01780 767526
Email address	office@wildslodgeschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Robin Lee
Proprietor	Robin Lee and 6 other shareholders
Reporting inspector	Peter McKenzie AI
Dates of inspection	8–9 July 2010