

# West Kirby Residential School

107–119 Meols Drive, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside CH48 5DH

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

West Kirby Residential School is a non-maintained special educational needs school and college for young people, many of whom are on the autistic spectrum and/or have complex and significant emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many of the young people also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school provides residential accommodation. The residential provision was last inspected on 27 March 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 27 to 29 March 2018

**Overall experiences and progress of children and pupils,** taking into account

**requires improvement to be good**

How well children and pupils are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

inadequate

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and pupils. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of previous inspection:** 27 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Leaders have not taken effective action to address the shortfalls about recording that were identified at the last inspection
- There are omissions in many of the residential and administrative records. These records do not detail the actual action taken or demonstrate managerial oversight. This means that the residential pupils' progress or areas of specific need are not consistently identified.
- There were significant shortfalls identified in the leadership and management of the residential provision.
- Leaders have failed to plan adequately for a new residential home, resulting in a lack of stability for young people who reside in this provision.
- Leaders lack knowledge about the legal basis that residential pupils are living in the residential provision and, as a result, have not obtained the correct local authority documentation required for young people's placements.
- Internal monitoring systems are weak and ineffective, and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.
- Leaders have failed to keep the statement of purpose up to date and, as a result, this does not accurately reflect the service provided by the school.
- Risk assessments are not consistently clear regarding the actions expected of the staff when a risk has been identified. This could lead to staff being unsure about what to do in the event of a residential pupil presenting that risk.
- Some residential pupils access a wide range of activities outside school, but for other residential pupils opportunities were limited.
- Staff do not consistently communicate well with parents and professionals.
- Residential pupils are supported well with their health needs but there were some areas for improvement identified in ensuring consistency across the settings, particularly in respect of the storage of medication.
- Recruitment procedures are not consistently safe.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Most residential pupils make some progress from their starting points.
- Education and care staff work well together to ensure that residential pupils have consistency between school and the residential provision.
- Residential pupils are supported by a well-resourced and efficient therapy service which supports young people in their progress.
- Residential pupils are supported to develop independence skills which will help prepare them for adulthood.
- Behaviour management practices are robust and effective.
- Staff receive a good level of support and training to ensure that they can meet the needs of the residential pupils they are looking after.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 1.1 A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the Statement of Purpose is available to parents and staff, is made known to children through an appropriate method of communication and is seen to work in practice. The statement describes the overall purpose of the school and describes any theoretical or therapeutic model underpinning the practice of the school. It also explains the ethos and philosophy of the school, and provides an outline of provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 22.2 Each child's file includes the information in Appendix 2 (individual records).

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Leadership and management of the residential provision is inadequate. This has impacted on the overall judgement and, as such, the experience and progress of residential pupils requires improvement to be good.

Residential pupils are making good progress in their education. This is because education and care staff work well together to ensure consistency for residential pupils between the residential provision and school. Care staff support residential pupils at school during the day and some school staff support the care staff in the residential provision. There are daily morning meetings at which residential pupils are discussed. As a result, residential pupils make good progress in their education. Some are going on to college and university and school data shows that residential pupils make progress academically. Leaders have systems in place to track residential students' academic progress, and they use these to demonstrate the positive impact that living at the school has on residential pupils' progress.

Most residential pupils receive well-planned and coordinated care. Most residential pupils have an individual support plan which details their individual needs. However, the quality of these is not consistent. Staff set achievable targets for most residential pupils on a weekly basis which staff review to monitor individual progress. However, some residential pupils' target sheets were blank, which does not demonstrate how they are supported in their progress.

Positive relationships were observed between residential pupils and care staff during the inspection. Most residential pupils were positive about staying in the school. One young person commented that '[name of member of staff] has helped me from my first day. He told me I would be fine, and he has really helped with my behaviour; and if I'm angry, I now go and spend time on my own to calm down.'

Some residential pupils access a range of social, educational and recreational activities out of school. However, this was not consistent across the range of settings. Some residential pupils do regularly access activities based in the community, such as cadets and local youth groups, but this was not consistent across the settings. Some residential pupils' records showed that they were not encouraged to access a variety of experiences. One parent stated that they were concerned 'around the lack of activities provided in the residential home'. This does not reflect the ethos of the school identified in the statement of purpose by ensuring that residential pupils are encouraged to take part in a range of leisure activities. Consequently, this limits their opportunity to develop new skills and increase their confidence.

The school has a school nurse and healthcare assistant on site who support residential pupils' health at the school. They ensure that each residential pupil has a

healthcare plan which details their individual health needs. The school nurse is proactive in ensuring that health appointments are followed up and communicates well with health professionals and parents to ensure that residential pupils' health needs are met. All staff are trained in the administration of medication by the school nurse and this training is regularly refreshed. There are clear protocols and individual plans in place for the management of conditions such as epilepsy and asthma. There were some areas for improvement identified in the storage of controlled medication and the monitoring of medication practices in the residential provision.

The school has speech and language therapists on site and they work effectively with care staff to ensure that residential pupils can actively participate in decisions about their lives. Residential pupils are supported to communicate using their chosen method of communication. Staff use picture exchange communication systems and social stories with residential pupils to aid their understanding of situations and behaviour. There is good evidence that the speech and language team support care staff through training to use these methods effectively. Overall, the school is well resourced in terms of therapeutic support available for residential pupils. There are good examples of how occupational therapy has supported residential pupils' progress in their physical and emotional health.

Residential pupils are consulted through attending weekly meetings with staff in the homes, and there is evidence that young people's requests from these meetings are acted on and followed through. Residential pupils have access to an independent visitor, although not all residential pupils spoken with during the inspection knew how to access this person or how to make a complaint about their care. This is a missed opportunity.

Staff support residential pupils to develop independence skills specific to their development and individual starting points. They do this by setting weekly targets in areas such as self-care, and incorporating tasks, such as taking their dirty clothes to the laundry area, into their daily routines. This ensures that residential pupils are supported to develop skills which will support them in adulthood. One parent commented, 'My son started staying over one night a week before Christmas. He is well supported by the school and residential staff, and he has come on massively with his independence skills since starting this. I and my son feel well supported and informed at all times and staff are friendly, supportive and professional at all times.'

Parents gave mixed feedback about the school. Some were positive about the level of communication from staff and the progress that their children have made in their independence skills, education and social and emotional development. Other feedback was less positive, mainly about the level of communication from school. One parent commented, 'Communication is sometimes excellent and sometimes less so. Because of the nature of our children, they don't place any importance on giving parents information.'

### **How well children and pupils are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Staff are effective in safeguarding practice and have a strong feeling of shared ownership to keep residential pupils safe. Staff adopt a whole-school approach to understanding the importance of safeguarding, with each staff member ensuring that they remain vigilant. Staff take responsibility for identifying risks online and in real life, and for protecting residential pupils from those risks. When safeguarding incidents occur, partners work well together to share information.

Risks for most residential pupils are identified and reduced. However, the risk assessments are of variable quality. Risk assessments are not consistently clear regarding the actions expected of the staff when a risk has been identified. This could lead to staff being unsure about what to do in the event of a residential pupil presenting that risk.

Behaviour management practices are effective. These promote residential pupils' positive behaviours. Residential pupils have a varied range of complex needs which requires a number of different specialist approaches. These include specific health requirements, behavioural characteristics associated with their diagnosed disabilities, and bespoke communication needs. Residential staff understand most pupils' unique conditions and behaviours. Any residential pupil who needs to calm down is reminded to do this immediately, and given space and time to do so. The residential pupils know what to expect. This helps them to feel secure. An internal reward scheme gives the residential pupils the incentive and motivation to try hard.

Health and safety systems for the main school site and residential settings are effective. A dedicated team ensures that service appliance checks are carried out. This is systematic and does not depend on one person. Fire checks and fire drills work well. The residential pupils participated in an unannounced fire evacuation during the inspection and this went well. This practice promotes residential pupils' safety.

Leaders and managers undertake training in safer recruitment processes. However, it was found that one member of staff had not been carefully vetted prior to employment. This increases the potential for unsuitable applicants to gain employment at the school.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

Internal monitoring systems are weak and ineffective, and leaders and managers do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.

Shortfalls were identified in the effectiveness of leaders and managers during this

inspection. These manifested during the inspection as difficulty in obtaining documents, different information being presented, and inspectors being given incorrect details for the residential pupils' social workers and about their legal status.

The school has a number of systems for monitoring in place, including visits by governors to the residential homes, and the head of care undertakes his own monitoring of the residential provision. This monitoring has, however, not been effective in identifying the shortfalls that were identified in this inspection. Leaders have not completed a self-assessment and did not demonstrate a good understanding of their strengths and weakness during the inspection. This has had an effect on the continued development of the service.

Leaders have not taken effective action to fully address the shortfall about recording that was identified at the last inspection. There has been some improvement in care and safeguarding plans, but there were further shortfalls identified in recording during this inspection. The quality of records within residential pupils' individual files is inconsistent. Not all records identify the specific needs of residential pupils and how these needs should be met. Furthermore, these records do not always evidence the work that staff are doing with residential pupils and there are some gaps, such as weekly target sheets not always being completed. This does not reflect the statement of purpose which states, 'Evidence based practice ensures progress is monitored and all records and reports required kept up to date and maintained to the highest professional standard in keeping with school & national policy procedures and regulations.' Recording was an area identified as needing improvement at the last inspection.

Leaders have a vision for the development of the service. However, this is not contained in an up-to-date residential development plan. As a result, there is a lack of evaluation and a lack of continuation of the targets set in the 2016–17 residential development plan, meaning that there is a lack of focus about the development of these provisions.

There has been a lack of planning for a new residential provision which has opened off site. The planning for this is not contained in any development plan, and there was a lack of audit trail about how decisions in relation to this have been made. As such, the planning around this provision has lacked focus and does not demonstrate how leaders have prioritised the needs of the residential pupils who have been placed in this provision. This lack of planning for the residential pupils who reside in this accommodation is likely to result in a lack of stability of home environment for them. The manager in charge of running this residential provision also reported to the inspector that he had raised concerns about this to the leadership team.

Leaders lack an understanding of the legal status of young people living in the residential provision. This has hindered leaders' understanding of residential pupils' plans, and their ability to challenge the local authority about residential pupils' plans and when they have not received the required documentation from the local

authority. As a result, leaders are not clear about the legal basis of residential pupils' placements and there was an inconsistency in the recording of this on pupils' plans on case files. For some residential pupils who have looked after child status there was not the required documentation. This means that there is a lack of clarity about young people's plans.

Leaders have not kept the statement of purpose up to date, and the current statement of purpose does not accurately reflect the provision that is currently being offered by the school in terms of the number of residential placements available or the number of residential groups. The statement of purpose states, 'Residential placements are available for up to 16 young people over our three residential groups.' However, during the inspection, documentation was provided that showed that the school is providing accommodation for up to 35 pupils over four residential provisions. In this regard, the school is not meeting its stated aims and objectives.

The residential provision is adequately staffed by staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to meet the needs of the residential pupils they are looking after. New staff are given an effective induction and staff receive regular and relevant training to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to meet residential pupils' needs. Staff like working in the residential provision and feel that they work well with education staff in the school. Staff receive supervision and feel well supported in their role.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and pupils. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and pupils. They watched how professional staff work with children and pupils and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and pupils and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and pupils whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC018958

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Iain Sim

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector(s)**

Sarah Billett, social care inspector (lead)  
Elaine Clare, social care inspector



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