

# West Kirby Residential School

Meols Drive, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside, CH48 5DH

**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- West Kirby Residential School continues to provide an excellent education. Despite the two previous inspections judging it outstanding, senior staff have not rested on their laurels. They continue to drive forward improvements and staff are very much on-board.
- Senior leaders are rigorous in their pursuit of excellence. They have eliminated teaching that is less than good and are sustaining a high level of outstanding teaching. Ongoing training for staff has been very effective.
- Teachers are very receptive to the feedback and advice they receive and their teaching is outstanding overall. They provide excellent feedback to pupils who know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. A few pupils' thinking could be stretched even more if teachers' planning included more precise learning objectives for them.
- The achievements of the pupils are excellent. They compare very favourably with those of similar pupils in other special schools. Pupils make great progress in their subjects and in developing their personal and social skills because of the consistently high-quality teaching and care they receive.
- Pupils are almost always polite, courteous and extremely well-behaved. Staff deal with the occasional episode of difficult behaviour expertly. They have a great understanding of the pupils' needs and apply the agreed systems consistently well.
- The school takes safeguarding very seriously. Staff and governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and remain vigilant. The school's systems to keep pupils safe are exemplary.
- Very rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensure the governors and senior staff have a wholly accurate view of the school. They leave no stone unturned in checking how well the school is doing. Middle leaders, too, are very effective in leading their departments and monitoring how they are performing.
- The work of the school's integrated services team is outstanding. It coordinates the work of staff with a range of different skills very well, and ensures that pupils who might have additional needs and potential underachievement are very well supported.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Excellent leadership and teaching, combined with an extremely suitable curriculum, prepare students very well for life beyond school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, taught by 14 members of staff. Three of the observations were jointly undertaken with the principal, vice-principal and assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, and members of staff. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority that has placed most pupils at the school.
- The inspector took account of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the 60 staff questionnaire returns and the school's March 2012 surveys of parents' views, staff views and pupils' views.
- The work of the school was observed and a number of documents were looked at, including: the school's monitoring records; its checks on how well it is doing; data about students' progress; records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding; the school improvement plan and records of governors' meetings.

## Inspection team

Eric Craven, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Coleman

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- West Kirby Residential School provides for pupils with a range of special educational needs. Around three quarters have autistic spectrum disorders and this proportion has increased markedly over the last couple of years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school provides weekday residence for up to 18 pupils. The most recent report on the residential provision may be obtained at: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- The vast majority of pupils are White British. There are about six times as many boys as girls. Eleven pupils are currently in the care of their local authority.
- The government provides extra funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or who are children of families in the Services, through the pupil premium. The proportion of pupils eligible to be supported by the pupil premium is a little above average.
- The school currently takes pupils from 15 local authorities with around half coming from Wirral. Almost all pupils are transported to school.
- The school has specialist status for special educational needs and behaviour.
- The principal is a National Leader in Education and the school is designated as a National Support School. It is currently working with schools locally and higher education institutions.
- The awards the school has achieved include International School status, Healthy School and Artsmark Silver.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' planning includes more specific learning objectives for individuals and groups of pupils, so that they are suitably stretched in their thinking and the activities they are given to do.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Many of the pupils have experienced significant difficulties in their education prior to being referred to the school. As a result of these, and in many cases because of their special educational needs, their attainment overall when they arrive is well below expected standards.
- Nevertheless, because of excellent teaching, very good attendance and a curriculum that is well suited to their needs, they make splendid progress while they are at the school. During the inspection, the progress of pupils in lessons observed was never less than good and frequently outstanding.
- In comparison to similar pupils elsewhere, the school's data show that pupils are making at least the expected rates of progress and often exceeding them. In English, mathematics and science, the great majority of pupils meet or surpass the targets set for them. Many pupils make outstanding progress in reading because of the school's determined and well-coordinated drive to improve reading. Around 65% of pupils have made marked progress in a short period of time, with some pupils adding two years to their reading age in just a single term.
- Different groups of pupils fare well regardless of their needs. For example, those in the care of their local authority, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and girls do as well as, if not better than, the whole of the pupil population. The school narrows the gap in achievement for pupils funded by the pupil premium.
- The pupils' attainment is on the rise, with more pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, than last year; pupils eligible for free school meals did particularly well in GCSE examinations in 2012. The number of GCSE and other qualifications has risen year on year from 2010.
- The pupils make great gains in their personal and social skills, with many learning to cope with their social and communication difficulties extremely well. Along with their academic achievements, this prepares them very well for life after school. Almost all pupils move into further education when they leave school, and there are also isolated examples of students going to university.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is never less than good, as shown by the school's own monitoring records over time and the lesson observations of inspectors. The proportion of outstanding teaching is high and has been sustained over the last three years. Virtually all parents completing the Ofsted online questionnaire agree that their children are well taught.
- This high-quality teaching is demonstrated by: splendid relationships between pupils and staff; the very effective work of teaching assistants and care staff, working most often hand-in-hand with teachers; and well-resourced, meaningful and relevant activities that capture the pupils' interest. A good example is a sixth-form lesson that had students evaluating and then practising conversations in which they had to be suitably assertive when another person's conversation became irrelevant.
- Teachers universally share with pupils what they want them to achieve in their lessons. Learning is enhanced because pupils have clarity about what is expected and how well they are doing. This is helped by super marking and feedback from teachers, who follow this up splendidly to check pupils have understood and acted on the feedback.
- Pupils are keen to participate in most lessons and frequently collaborate well with their peers. They regularly assess their own work and that of their classmates. This, too, helps them understand how much they have achieved.
- Teachers know their pupils well. The assessments they make are accurate because there are good systems in place to check and compare assessments.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and in the best lessons they make sure pupils are

thinking and working as hard as they possibly can. Teachers' planning includes objectives and measures of success for their lessons. However, these do not always include objectives that are specific to individual pupils or small groups of pupils. As a result, some pupils are not challenged to think as deeply as they might.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The great majority of pupils have pride in the school, as shown by their conduct and manners. It is a credit to the staff and pupils that the school looks as nice as it does. There is no litter or graffiti to be found, and wall displays are well respected and admired.
- In the lessons observed during the inspection, the behaviour of the students was excellent in around half and never less than good. Pupils mostly have excellent relationships with staff and they greatly appreciate the points they can achieve for their effort and behaviour during each lesson.
- The school's data show behaviour to have improved over time. The number of incidents that warrant their recording by the school has seen a downward trend, as have the times when a physical intervention has been required. Incidents of bullying, which pupils say are more often to do with name-calling, have lessened considerably over the last three years. Recorded incidents of a racial nature are very rare, with only one in 2011/12.
- This improved behaviour is set against a backdrop of a changing population of pupils, with more coming to the school with communication and social difficulties and the frustrations these bring. Regardless, behaviour is improving because of the school's drive to train and support staff. The effectiveness of the integrated support team, made up of staff from various disciplines such as behaviour support, educational psychology, medical staff and speech and language therapy, is excellent. It is very instrumental in training and advising staff and providing coordinated support for individual pupils.
- The school's systems to keep the pupils safe are robust. The pupils who met with the inspectors said they feel safe and can talk to staff if they have worries. Almost universally, the parents responding to the Ofsted and school questionnaires said their children were safe at the school. Staff are very watchful and care staff supervise pupils very well at lunchtimes.
- The attendance of pupils of compulsory school age is above the national average. It has risen by 3% over the last year.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The school is expertly led by a senior leadership team and governing body that are determined and skilful in getting the best from the staff. It is most telling that unanimously, the 60 members of staff completing the Ofsted questionnaire said they were proud to be at the school.
- The school systematically checks how well it is doing. For example, the appraisal of teachers' performance is clearly understood, rigorously applied and makes a positive difference to teachers' own development and to the school's development. The proportion of teachers who have been rewarded with promotion rightly reflects the high quality of teaching at the school. The management of teaching and learning is impressive; it is the reason why the quality of teaching is being sustained at a high level and being improved further.
- Through its analysis of data and its knowledge of individuals, the school ensures there is no inequality or discrimination.
- The curriculum is well suited to the different needs of pupils and is reviewed regularly. Pupils' involvement in the local and wider community, and the rich array of experiences they have, add greatly to their excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Literacy is being promoted well in all subjects. In addition, the emphasis on reading is reaping rewards. A recent good example is the DEAR Project (Drop Everything and Read), which has contributed to accelerated reading gains for some pupils in a short period of time. There are occasional missed opportunities to get pupils to use their best handwriting and to check on their

spelling when writing in subjects other than English. The use of numeracy in other subjects is not as advanced as literacy, but plans are unfolding to push this forward.

- The school's use of the pupil premium funding is restricted at the moment. One local authority has passed the pupil premium funding to the school in addition to the school's standard charge for a pupil's place. The school reports that others are yet to do so and is urgently discussing this to resolve the problem. The pupil premium funding received has been appropriately used to fund a learning mentor to work with eligible pupils. Although this work is still to be formally evaluated, early indications show that it is being successful in helping these pupils achieve well.
- Response to the school's last survey of parents demonstrates their satisfaction with the school. All who responded said they were pleased their child was at this school. A small number who completed the Ofsted questionnaire felt pupils did not receive appropriate homework. Senior staff have already identified this as an area for improvement and are well-advanced in making changes.
- The school's use of its specialist status and the funding this attracts has been extremely good. Pupils' behaviour has improved as a result of this funding being used to form a behaviour and education support team, and more recently the integrated services team. The school has led helpful training for local schools on the management of behaviour, and it hosts a module of training in special educational needs for a higher education institution.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are performing their roles exceptionally well. They marry support and challenge skilfully. They have a range of representatives with valuable educational and business expertise that enable them to ask the right questions in holding the school to account. The regular visits they make to the school, including unannounced ones, help them further their knowledge and to check what they hear and read about. Because of this, the governors have a very good appreciation of the quality of teaching, the progress of the pupils, the effectiveness of teachers' appraisals and how well the pupil premium funding is being used.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105137
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	402967

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Wylie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gareth Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6323201
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