

West Kirby Residential School

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

Inspection dates

27/03/2017 to 29/03/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Young people are safe and feel safe here. They are making very good progress in relation to their starting points in all aspects of their development.
- Young people have a good relationship with the staff. They enjoy spending time with them and are increasingly able to talk to them about how they are feeling.
- The leadership and management of the residential provision are sound. As a result, the residence is an intrinsic part of the school. All staff work together effectively to support the young people.
- Parents and carers are supportive of the setting and said that, as a result of their child's stay, 'they now have their child back'. They are happier and better able to manage challenging situations, such as going out in the community.
- In some records there are a number of shortfalls relating both to the quality and detail of record keeping and the use of some terminology, which leaves entries open to misinterpretation.
- Monitoring of practice at the school lacks rigour. This is because it has not identified the slippage in records such as care plans and safeguarding plans, or the lack of internet access in the community houses.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the monitoring of the residential provision to provide critical analysis of the quality of care, the robustness of records and the actions needed to address any shortfalls.
- Further enhance the quality of records to ensure that they are maintained to a consistently high standard.
- Consider the use of terminology in records, so that these are helpful to young people both now and in the future when they access their records.
- Further enhance the safeguarding plans to ensure that they contain sufficient information.
- Ensure that young people have access to the internet at their residence.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was formally announced on day one by a telephone call to the school. A full tour of the residential premises was undertaken and a range of records were examined. A number of senior staff including the principal and deputy head of care were spoken with throughout the inspection and informed of the emerging findings. The inspector spent time talking to care staff and the young people. Evening activities were observed over two nights. Feedback was provided on the final day to the principal, deputy head, deputy head of care, a school governor, the business manager and assistant head of care.

Inspection team

Chris Scully

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this 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 or with complex and significant emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many young people also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are currently 90 pupils on roll, between the ages of eight and 18 years. The school is currently providing residential places for up to 22 young people during weekdays in term time. There is a variety of boarding arrangements available, depending on the needs of the child, ranging from one to four nights each week. The school provides residential accommodation on the main school site and in two houses in the local area. The location of the school and houses enables young people to easily access facilities in the community. They are close to bus stops, a train station, leisure centres, swimming pools, youth clubs, shops, the beach, parks and other schools. The residential provision was last inspected on 10 to 12 February 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The school is well led and managed by the principal, who is committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for all young people, regardless of their starting points. He leads by strong example and is supported by an effective leadership team, which includes the head of care. Young people's attainment and attendance at school have improved, and there is a wealth of opportunities available to them which significantly increase their confidence and self-esteem. The school residential provision and community houses are undergoing some refurbishment. This includes new carpets, and the garages are being converted into additional rooms for the young people to access.

The monitoring of the care provision is no longer robust. It does not accurately reflect the inspection findings, such as the decline in record keeping. Immediate action was taken during the inspection to address this.

Young people enjoy their time in residence. They said that it allows them to spend time with their friends, which is something that they cannot all do at home. Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff. This has enabled them to grow in self-belief, because they know that the staff are there for them and respond effectively to their ever-changing needs.

Young people engage better with their education because of their stay. This is due to them being well prepared for the day by staff who follow each young person's individual routines. Staff know who likes to be up early and those who need some extra persuasion in the mornings to get ready. As a result, they effectively plan for this and young people arrive at school on time and ready to learn. School data demonstrates that residential pupils are achieving their targets 100% in a number of subjects in the school, compared to day pupils' 78%.

Young people are actively encouraged to be as independent as possible in relation to their unique abilities. Evening and morning routines are planned around them so that they have plenty of time to see to their own personal care needs. Staff work effectively in partnership with families to ensure that young people hear the same messages. This ensures that they receive consistent care and support, which enables them to make progress. For example, some are now able to shower without support from staff.

Young people thoroughly enjoy spending time with their friends in residence and on trips in the community. They take part in an extensive range of activities that incorporate their individual needs, preferences and interests. This includes opportunities for work experience in art galleries, youth clubs, horse riding, and drama and boxing clubs. Young people's views are central to everything that the school does, from planning evening menus to the decor and activities. Young people feel valued, because they are listened to and staff carefully consider their views.

One young person successfully challenged the school on his lack of access to the internet in a community house. He explained that the lack of internet was affecting his studies, as he could not access his revision notes and schoolwork. This was appropriately

arranged for him, but the internet is not yet accessible to all young people in the houses. Action is being taken to address this, but it will be several months before it is in place.

The school's healthcare arrangements are strong. A medical team supports young people during the day and ensures that all their medication is current and up to date. Staff are trained to administer medication and first aid, and to deal with seizures and other medical conditions. This helps to keep young people safe. However, some care plans do not make clear the action to take to support some medical conditions, such as epilepsy and asthma. This is a recording issue and immediate action was taken to address this.

Parents are complimentary about the school and the changes that their child's attendance at residence have brought about for them. They said: 'She loves school and being here, and we get the weekends back with our little girl, who is happier and enjoys going out with us. She is now able to engage in all of her classes, because they (staff) understand her sensory issues and are continually addressing these.' Another parent said that the decision to send their child here was 'huge and not what we wanted. However, this has been 'massive' for us. His anxieties have greatly reduced, meaning that we can go out as a family. He is much happier and he now has friends.'

Effective partnerships between the residential provision, school and parents mean that even the smallest detail is shared. Parents said that communication between them and school is excellent. They are pleased that they are called to be told of the positives, such as that their child has enjoyed an outing, as well as areas of concern. Parents say that they are confident to speak to staff, and that they are always listened to and fully engaged in the decisions made about their child.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Care planning is secure. Individualised care plans reflect the uniqueness of each young person. However, they are not always completed to the same high standard, especially regarding young people's health needs. The impact is reduced by staff's excellent understanding of each young person's needs, and how they are met daily is clearly demonstrated. Plans are continually adjusted to meet each young person's ever-changing needs. Effective daily handovers ensure that staff continue to work in a consistent way for each young person.

Staff are skilled in implementing a range of support strategies within a structured environment. Adopting a positive and enthusiastic approach, staff offer a nurturing environment in which young people can develop their individuality and benefit from opportunities to maximise their potential and improve their self-esteem.

Young people build strong, trusting relationships with staff, because the staff's interactions with them are calm and focused. This enables young people to respond positively to the support that the staff offer. Parents said that they trust staff and that, from their point of view: 'The hardest and scariest thing to do is to send your child away to school. But school made this easy for us, because she is so happy. This was the best decision that we could have made.'

Staff are proactive in seeking young people's views and opinions. This inclusive approach

provides young people with a range of options and support to help to make age-appropriate choices. Each young person has a key worker who meets them individually and advocates on their behalf to ensure that their opinions are known. Young people thrive, and develop confidence and belief in their ability to self-determine, knowing that their views and opinions are important and that staff listen and appreciate them as unique individuals.

Two independent advocates support the young people. The advocates visit regularly and are building positive relationships with the young people. A young person said that they knew about them and had met them, but did not need any help from them at this time.

Young people continue to make excellent progress in all areas of their development. They are increasing in confidence when dealing with various social interactions. One young person explained how she is more able to describe how she is feeling to staff. This means that they can intervene quickly to support her to reduce her anxieties and feelings of being 'tangled'. As a consequence, adaptations to her school timetable mean that she can now fully engage with all her lessons and is making excellent progress.

The interaction between school and care staff is seamless. Care staff said: 'We are not care staff and school staff: we are one staff team, and we all work together to support the young people.' Care staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's education targets and areas of development. These are effectively incorporated into their plan so that young people receive consistent support and responses.

One young person was experiencing immense difficulties in going into class. As a result, the care staff created a classroom on the residential provision so that, on the days when he felt unable to go to class, he had an alternative safe learning environment in which to study. This proactive approach is intrinsic to everything that the school does to support young people. Parents said that they cannot praise staff enough for all that they do for their children.

Young people enjoy a wide range of healthy meals and snacks. Evening meals are lively social occasions when all young people sit together to talk about their day. Young people eagerly involve visitors in their discussions about the 'Going for gold' scheme and their love of superheroes. Meals are effectively designed and prepared to meet the individual needs of each young person. Older pupils take an active part in planning, preparing and cooking an evening meal for their group. Staff say that the young people do need gentle reminders to clear away as they go along. Young people said that they enjoy doing this and it is helping to prepare them for college, when they may have to do this for themselves every night.

Supporting young people's independence is at the heart of everything that the staff do. Whether it is showering, washing, travelling independently or doing their own laundry, staff make effective use of every opportunity as a learning experience for young people. Consequently, all young people are making excellent progress across all areas of their development.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people's safety is a priority. Staff have a secure understanding of the school's safeguarding arrangements, and work with other agencies when needed to support young people. Positive relationships between teaching and care staff mean that everyone is made aware of any issues which may affect a young person's stay in residence. Safeguarding plans are improving, but do not yet identify the actual level of risk for each young person, and some lack clarity. However, staff are very aware of the individual needs of young people and are confident to report any concerns to the designated safeguarding officers. Any child protection or safeguarding concerns are immediately shared with the designated officer of the local authority or children's social care teams, and their advice is acted upon by the school.

Similarly, staff have a secure understanding of the 'Prevent' duty. This resulted in them making a referral due to concerns about a young person in relation to radicalisation. This was fully investigated and not taken any further. Staff continue to support the young person and their family. This effective proactive and appropriately reactive approach means that staff are able to keep young people safe.

Staff are skilled communicators who creatively interweave safeguarding topics into conversation. As a result, for example, young people are developing a better awareness of internet safety and can tell others about how to keep themselves safe.

Incidents of young people being missing from residence are extremely rare. On the very few occasions that this has occurred, the staff took swift and effective action. This meant that the young person was quickly located and returned safely.

The use of physical intervention in the residence is minimal. Sanctions are generally appropriate, and reflect the age and understanding of the young person and the impact of the behaviour. However, the recording of incidents is not always robust. This is because some of the terminology such as 'over-excited or not following morning routines' does not make clear why a young person has received the sanction. This is primarily a recording issue and does not affect the care provided.

Staff are skilled at de-escalation techniques. They handle challenging situations well by talking calmly to young people and changing whom the young person is talking to, as well as bringing in school staff with whom they have a positive relationship. This approach is very successful in helping young people to think about what they are doing and to make the right choices.

Young people are pleased with the new 'Going for gold' scheme. They tell visitors with great enthusiasm how it works and how it is helping them to keep on track. The scheme enables young people to amass points for positive behaviour. Young people are able to convert these points into money to purchase items such as Lego. Young people said that it is good, as it goes by the hour so, if they had a difficult hour, they can then change things around later in the evening. One young person explained how he had advised staff to order his Lego from a particular online store, as it was cheaper.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The residential provision is managed well. It is an integral part of the school, and the positive impact and commitment to improving outcomes for young people across all their areas of learning are highly valued. The principal and senior management team (SMT) and deputy head of care are committed to addressing the shortfalls identified at this inspection, and have taken immediate action. This includes the quality of recording in care plans, safeguarding plans and other records, the inappropriate use of some terminology in records and the access to the internet in the community houses.

Governors are supportive and are working in partnership with the SMT to resolve any issues. The chair and deputy chair acknowledge that there had been some difficulties, as the head of care is away from work. The deputy and assistant head of care have risen to the challenge and are confident that swift action is taken to address identified concerns or shortfalls. The governors are to re-examine how they monitor the provision to further support the school. This is because their monitoring is not yet sufficiently robust, which they recognise.

The care staff work well together as a team. They know and understand each other's strengths and area of expertise, and effectively utilise them. They relish the opportunities to take on their new roles as mental health, speech and language and behaviour management champions. They feel empowered and have had opportunities to research their topics and share this information with others at their Friday meetings.

The appraisal and supervision process to manage staff performance ensures that staff understand their roles, and have clear objectives and adequate and focused training. The training and development of staff are prioritised. This means that all staff have an understanding of autism and its associated conditions, and the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support young people and continually promote positive outcomes. Staff said that training around 'sexting' and social media was particularly insightful. It had helped them to help keep young people safe and also increased their understanding of reporting processes.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	105137
Social care unique reference number	SC018958
DfE registration number	

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	91
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	5 to 19
Headteacher	Iain Sim
Date of previous boarding inspection	10/02/2016
Telephone number	0151 632 3201
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