

Woodeaton Manor School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

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, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Woodeaton Manor is located within the rural community of Woodeaton in Oxfordshire. It is registered as a residential special school and provides education for 52 children and young people of either gender who are aged between 11 and 16 years. While the school admits pupils who may be assessed as having behavioural, emotional and social disorders (BESD), it particularly focuses on children with emotional and social difficulties. The vast majority of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders.

Woodeaton Manor provides flexible boarding arrangements for up to four nights a week for up to 10 pupils. A team of residential staff takes responsibility for these pupils after the school day until the following morning.

The last inspection of the residential provision took place on 13 January 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Leadership and management of the school and the residential setting are extremely strong. The leadership provides clarity and direction to staff, and security and stability to residential pupils. There is a strong relationship between the residential setting and the school, and it is because of this that residential pupils progress. Residential pupils benefit from being looked after by a well-established, highly motivated staff team who are forward thinking and have a constant desire to drive standards forward. Standards of care and provision have improved further since the last inspection, for example, with the provision of the new outdoor play equipment.
- Staff are trained, competent and dedicated to their roles. They enjoy their work and this reflects in the positive comments received from residential pupils.
- Pupils enjoy enhanced life opportunities as a result of the exceptional standard of care provided. The school successfully challenges pre-conceptions and barriers within society, and is a strong advocate of inclusion. It promotes many varied opportunities for residential pupils and others to participate and compete alongside their peers, for example, the consumer rights quiz. Parents and carers strongly agree that boarding 'helps my child's progress and development'.
- Residential pupils develop social skills and become less socially isolated as a result of spending time with their friends. The programme of on and off-site activities is stimulating, varied and interesting, and residential pupils develop intellectually, socially and physically by taking part in this.
- Pupils are protected within the residential setting by the consistent application of the school's safe working practices. Staff are trained and competent in their roles.

A robust monitoring system ensures that any shortfalls are quickly identified and addressed. The high standards set by the school in relation to health and safety and the well-being of staff are consistently recognised by external auditors, such as the local authority. All boarders strongly agree or agree that they 'feel safe in the boarding house'.

- Appropriate safeguards are taken to keep children safe. Behaviour is well managed, and conduct within the residential setting is good. There are few incidents, and sanctions and physical restraint are rarely used. Incidents within the school setting reduce over time. There are no recent incidents of residential pupils going missing. Bullying is not reported to be an issue. All residential pupils say they have someone they can turn to, and the school deals well with incidents of bullying.
- Without exception, residential pupils enjoy their residential experience. Residential pupils either agree or strongly agree that they 'enjoy boarding and are treated fairly'. The school is able to demonstrate that pupils who have involvement with the residential unit make greater progress.
- Excellent and comprehensive pre-admission assessments identify the assessed needs of residential and other pupils. Care plans formulated from these assessments inform staff of the strategies for staff to use to help young people progress in all aspects of their development. Regular reviews of the targets within care plans determines the effectiveness of the strategies being used.
- The school has met the national minimum standards and has taken appropriate action to meet the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes of care in the residential setting are outstanding. The boarding community is highly inclusive. Residential pupils have exceptionally good relationships with staff and with each other. Staff focus on helping residential pupils to have an understanding and an empathy for each other. Staff help boarders to develop a tolerance of each other and to recognise each other's strengths. Pupils and staff regularly celebrate each other's achievements and this is particularly evident within 'circle time'. The needs of young people are carefully assessed for their compatibility within the residential setting. Residential pupils say, 'we normally only stay in the residential setting when staff know we are likely to get along with each other.' Residential and school staff are nurturing and caring. Residential pupils behave well. There is little need for sanctions or the use of physical restraint within the residential setting.

Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy the residential experience and take every opportunity to participate in both the existing and new stimulating opportunities it offers. Staff consult and engage with residential pupils in planning activities and involve them in applying for funding for special activities and outings such as a

recently planned narrow-boat trip which was organised entirely by pupils. Within the limited time available, the residential setting supports residential pupils to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. They benefit from healthy and nutritious meals served by the school's catering team. Residential pupils are also engaged in a programme of evening activities such as swimming.

There are sophisticated and well-orchestrated systems in place for monitoring the progress of all pupils in each aspect of their development. These demonstrate that those young people who have had contact with the residential setting benefit and make the most progress.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Both communal areas and dormitories are decorated and furnished to a high standard. The quality of pastoral support is excellent. Boarders receive excellent guidance and support from the care staff. There are clear and effective systems for the sharing of information between the residential setting and the school, for instance, within the daily briefings. As a result, all staff develop a common understanding of the needs of each young person. Boarders develop socially, educationally and emotionally as a result of the shared vision that academic and pastoral staff share.

Pre-admission assessments and care plans are comprehensive. They inform staff about the needs of each young person and how best to meet these. Pastoral staff and care staff again work consistently to effectively implement the strategies outlined. With the help of the educational psychologist, staff are imaginative and resourceful in identifying new strategies if young people are not seen to be making progress.

There is a comprehensive and well-thought-out induction process which is tailored to the needs of new residents and includes the opportunity for introductory visits. As a result, residential pupils quickly become familiar with the routines and expectations. Pupils benefit from an extensive and well-coordinated support system. They understand that their designated keyworker takes a specific interest in their welfare but say they 'turn to any member of staff for advice and support'. Some residential pupils say 'it is easier talking to the staff here than to other people'. Pupils are also the centre of a 'professional wrap-around service' of which the educational psychologist and out-of-school liaison officer are a part. The service succeeds in working with residential pupils and their families to improve outcomes. One professional associated with the school says: 'I visit many schools and nowhere else do they support children as well as here.'

Parents and carers maintain responsibility for most aspects of their children's healthcare, with responsibilities being clearly identified and agreed prior to admission. Extensive medical consents are obtained to ensure staff are clear about the action they can take in an emergency and should first aid be required. The

school curriculum provides age-appropriate advice and guidance on topics such as smoking, drugs, alcohol abuse and sexual health. This enables boarders to make informed lifestyle choices and identify sources of support.

Pupils are provided with a nutritious, balanced and varied diet. There is a good choice of food provided at all meals. The school caters appropriately for pupils' religious and cultural needs, vegetarians and special diets. Food is in plentiful supply and of good quality. Pupils have ready access to drinks, fruit and other snacks. There are opportunities for boarders to put their views forward about the food and changes are sometimes made as a result.

Pupils take part in an extensive range of activities after school. All activities are comprehensively risk assessed to ensure that safety issues are fully considered. The communal areas also offer a good variety of facilities, including a games room, television room and computer room.

Communal areas within the residential setting accommodation and facilities are all of a high standard. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment and all areas are clean, well decorated and maintained. The security of the residential area is excellent, with keypads fitted to the entrance. Young people say they feel 'safe and secure'. All boarders can securely lock away their belongings if they wish to, and report that their belongings are safe.

Pupils can easily contact family and friends by using the landline telephones in the boarding house and most children have their own mobile phone. The school maintains excellent communication with parents and carers. The use of a 'home to school' diary allows concerns to be voiced and addressed. Training events organised by the school specifically for parents and carers, enable parents to develop their skills and better understand the issues their children face.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard the welfare of pupils. Their safety is at the very heart of the school. The school demonstrates a clear commitment to protecting its pupils as is evidenced by the number of staff who have completed the designated safeguarding and behaviour management training.

Pupils are protected by the effective sharing of information with the local safeguarding team and by the application of robust and thorough recruitment procedures. A number of school staff attend training in safer recruitment, as a result of which there is a clear understanding of all the necessary checks which need completing. A robust and well-established monitoring process is in place to ensure that all the required recruitment checks are completed before people are appointed to work with children. This protects children from having contact with unsuitable people.

Children attend the school, often having had a disrupted education history or having been without education for long periods of time. Mutual trust and respect are unmistakably evident within the relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils say that staff are fair and records show there are few incidents necessitating the use of sanctions or physical restraint within residential setting. Staff reflect on their practice and all incidents are analysed thoroughly to prevent repetition. Care staff successfully share information with parents, carers and teaching staff. As a result they are largely successful in achieving a consistent approach in managing pupils' behaviour.

Preventative action, such as raising the pupils' awareness through education, reduces the number of incidents of bullying. Pupils inform staff of 'low-level' incidents, allowing intervention at an early stage. A very high and visible staff presence alongside a well-planned timetable of activities within the residential setting reduces the potential for bullying to occur. Any forms of bullying, such as racial or cyber-bullying are taken seriously and prompt action is taken to tackle it when it occurs. Pupils report disagreements but say, 'bullying rarely occurs in the residential setting as the staff are always around and quickly stop things from happening'. A thorough assessment of compatibility prior to pupils becoming resident is effective at assessing the likely dynamics of the group. Staff say, 'we are careful who we have staying overnight together'.

The safety and well-being of pupils and staff are paramount. Pupils are protected within the school environment by regular checks, maintenance and servicing of equipment. In addition to the regular checks completed by the school staff, robust annual audits of the school's health and safety arrangements by the local authority provides a further safeguard. The report of the most recent audit indicates that the school 'continues to maintain the high standards of health and safety that I would expect'. Prompt action is taken by the school in response to any identified issues. Fire safety precautions are effectively relayed to residential pupils, who know the procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

A separate annual external audit focuses on the well-being of staff. The most recent of these comments on the high levels of staff satisfaction and low levels of staff turnover and absenteeism.

Young people say they 'feel very safe in the school' and parents and carers also agree or strongly agree that the school keeps the children safe.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The headteacher and head of care are progressive and forward thinking. Parents, carers, pupils and staff are clear about the aims of the setting as a result of the written information forwarded to them. Staff are extremely committed, dedicated and happy in their role. A well coordinated training programme equips them with the skills and abilities to work with vulnerable pupils. Since the previous inspection staff have

access to an improved range of training materials and research with the introduction of an electronic library. Policies and procedures are available for staff to refer to and staff work consistently to these.

Care staff benefit from the extensive opportunities available for formal and informal support and supervision. As a result they work cooperatively, confidently and competently. They consistently meet the aims of the service by providing a very high standard of personalised care. Daily routines are very well established and reinforced by staff. As a result, young people know the standards of behaviour expected, and things run smoothly. Parents and carers are very positive about the service they receive.

The diverse needs of pupils are recognised and catered for, as a result of the comprehensive assessment of needs that is completed prior to them being admitted to the residential setting. The integrated, child-centred approach adopted by staff encompasses each and every child. Each one is understood and appreciated for their differences. Care staff contribute greatly to the role the school has to play in helping pupils to achieve their potential. Residential pupils derive immense enjoyment from the social activities provided and make excellent progress socially.

There has been excellent progress since the previous inspection. The recommendation made then has been addressed and new initiatives, such as the electronic library, have been implemented.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14/03/2012

Dear children

Inspection of Woodeaton Manor School

It was lovely to meet you all when I visited the school to conduct an inspection. I have decided that you receive an outstanding standard of care. You all told me how much you enjoy being at the school. You also enjoy staying overnight in the residence and benefit from being able to spend time with your friends. You all make tremendous progress while being in the school. This is largely as a result of the extremely positive relationships that you have with the staff and because of the varied educational and social opportunities that you all take part in. It was really good news that your school won the consumer quiz and that the narrow-boat trip was so successful.

A lot of the staff have worked at the school for a long time and this makes it a settled and happy place. Behaviour, overall, is very good. Staff are trained and try very hard to help you sort out your problems. Things sometimes become a little unsettled when children first start attending the school but the staff respond quickly and help sort things out. As children become more settled and familiar with the school, there are fewer issues. Sanctions are almost never used and the number of physical restraints happen less often. This is a sign of how much progress is being made. You all like and respect the staff. Someone said to me that 'the staff are very kind and intelligent'.

The school is very good at keeping you safe and healthy. The quality and variety of the food is very high and most of you say you 'think the food is great'.

It is really nice that you and your parents and carers are so appreciative of the help and support you receive. Another comment that was made to me was that 'this is the best school I have ever been to. I've not been to one like this before. We do so many things and the staff understand us'.

An inspector will visit you again next year to see whether all the other things that the school plans to do have happened.

Best wishes

Barbara Davies

Inspector

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Davies