

Woodeaton Manor School

Woodeaton Manor School, Woodeaton, OXFORD, OX3 9TS

Inspection dates	19 to 20 January 2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The residential facility is integral to the school and contributes significantly to the progress of children and young people who use it. They are helped to manage their anxieties and deal more effectively with transitions and change. For example, a young person who had a need to keep his uniform on while in residence (because he was still at school) was in casual clothes in the evening during the inspection.
- Children and young people value the relationships they have with members of staff immensely, especially those who regard them as providing a 'secure base' from which they can explore the opportunities available to them. These include new activities, learning independence skills and developing friendships. Lessons for life are learnt in the process, such as co-operation, negotiation and decision making.
- Young people enjoy boarding and engaging in activities they might not otherwise have the chance to experience. This is particularly valuable for those who are isolated within their own communities and have few opportunities to mix with peers. On occasion confidence increases sufficiently in social situations for them to be able to join clubs and make friends outside of the school.
- Pupils who board typically develop a more positive self-image; they see themselves as successful in personal relationships (because adults and peers want to spend time with them), as successful learners (because they acquire new skills) and as being able to make helpful and appreciated contributions (because their ideas for such things as activities are often taken up). This then translates into enhanced performance in school.
- The school has a policy of not giving formal sanctions but taking young people aside to consider their behaviour; this is effective. Children do not go missing or require restraining, due in part at least to the ability of staff to identify and divert difficulties early on and to the fact that young people are confident in the ability of adults to

resolve conflict and to meet their needs.

- Children and young people say that they can talk to staff members about any concerns and use both informal and formal channels to do so. This includes making known issues that make them unhappy outside of school. These have subsequently been followed up with other agencies and resulted in children's welfare being safeguarded.
- Excellent relationships have been formed with other professionals, including via secondments to the school, and with families to ensure a collaborative approach that results in better outcomes, through shared knowledge, skills and strategies.
- There is a strong ethos in the school of encouraging children and young people to think about 'how can I make things better, for others as well as myself?' Children learn empathy, a sense of self-efficacy and an ability to rise to challenges.

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?

- For the residential provision be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of children, bedrooms should be homely, domestic environments.
- In order to ensure children and young people have balanced, healthy diets the head of care should liaise with the school chef to plan menus in advance.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are normally announced on the morning of the first day by a phone call and followed by an email. A power cut at the time meant these were not received and staff had less than half an hour's notice of the inspector's arrival.

The residential accommodation area was visited on the main school site. Inspection activities included spending two evenings with young people there, sharing meals and activities with them and having informal conversations and a meeting with a small group. The school's circle time was attended and meals also taken in the main dining room, allowing views of children not using the residential facility to be obtained to. Meetings were held with the headteacher, residential staff (including the head of care) the educational psychologist, chef, property manager and teaching staff. Case files were examined for a sample of children who use the residential facilities. All policies and procedures relating to welfare and safeguarding were read and various other documentation relating to the effective running of the home such as recruitment records, governors' meetings and health and safety records were also perused.

In addition responses from the Ofsted surveys 'Parent View' were analysed.

Inspection team

Chris Peel

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this 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 68 children and young people who are aged between seven and 18 years. While the school admits pupils who may be assessed as having social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) 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 12 pupils at any one time who typically stay one night a week. A small team of residential staff takes responsibility for these pupils after the school day until the following morning.

As part of the school's commitment to good outcomes for children and young people with autistic spectrum and attachment disorders staff give support to adoptive families in the county even if their children are not pupils.

The last inspection of the residential provision took place on 15 January 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

A new staff team have only been in place since the beginning of the calendar year. The recently appointed head of care and residential care worker had worked in the facility before. They are assisted by four teaching assistants who join them one night a week each on a regular basis. Children and young people are familiar with them from the school. In this way there has been a continuity of service in the residential provision and between school and boarding. This is an important factor in ensuring children and young people manage the transitions involved.

Some changes have been introduced into the evening routine; one is engaging young people in forward planning one week to the next so that they pre-arrange meals and activities. Another is that staff join in the activities with them, rather than just organise them. This enhances the sense of participation, of being valued and enjoyment. One young person commented, 'the new staff are more fun and fit in more activities.'

Major renovation work has meant that the residential accommodation is currently in adjoining cottages that have a connecting door in the school grounds. These are very homely, welcoming places that the majority of children and young people said they preferred to the more institutional feel of where they were previously. The communal areas are well appointed for their needs, attractive and well furnished. The bathroom facilities are comfortable, with the girl's toilets in the main block is nothing less than a veritable powder room. The cottage bedrooms, however, are by contrast unattractive, although young people did not regard this as an issue. Two beds are in each room but generally only one is used each night with the other left unmade. This, piles of bagged bed linen and the absence of softening features such as pictures leaves them feeling quite bare.

Many pupils at the school have high levels of anxiety, particularly with change and separation from attachment figures (typically parents). A key role of the residential facility is therefore to increase their capacity to manage this; one at which it is highly successful. Amongst the things young people said they got from it was 'learning to be away from home'. The level of humour between young people and between them and staff indicates that they are relaxed in the environment.

The most impressive outcome, however, is that the experience of being resident helps children see themselves as able to make a contribution, as achievers and as people who adults and peers want to spend time with. For many this transfers into school life with a greater capacity to learn and into families and communities with the ability to integrate better.

Families value the additional opportunities residency give their children and the respite it provides them and siblings. For some it is an essential component in being able to maintain placements.

Many pupils who do not currently have the opportunity of boarding would like to as the experience of doing so clearly enriches the lives of young people who do.

Children and young people's needs are well understood and met by staff. They are treated with respect and affection. Their individual personality and needs are well known to staff who tailor responses to them extremely well. There is an attention to detail in this care so, for example, a young person helping to cook was asked what implement he thought he should use rather than be handed the right one.

The potential of admission to the residential provision is only offered after children and young people have settled in the school which means that there is a lot of information available on which to base decisions about which group pupils would be best to join. Up until now this had not been documented and no risk assessment of sleeping arrangements written down. A format was devised during the inspection that will record both.

Admissions are arranged in a way that is sensitive to the needs of individual children; during the inspection one young person was visiting (not for the first time) with the possibility of staying overnight. He decided to return home during the evening but was praised in circle time the next day 'for staying for the longest time so far'. Another was on his first evening and very excitable; he was helped to contain this by interventions from the headteacher and staff so that he had a successful stay.

Children readily give their views. They are sought by staff in a variety of ways but the most effective communication is done informally as young people say they prefer face to face communication than using forms. This is true whether it is to make a suggestion or raise a concern. They say that they know staff will take either seriously and respond appropriately.

Thorough placement plans are drawn up with the assistance of an educational psychologist when children are admitted to the school and individual care plans made if they subsequently use the residential facilities. Young people are made aware of these and their contribution about aims they would like to work towards and views about their progress sought. Again, this is frequently through conversations at appropriate times rather than meetings, which tend to inhibit them.

The comfortable atmosphere and the progress young people make comes from the relationships established by staff with them. One said that what he valued most was 'being with staff, and that you can talk openly with them;' and another described the adults as 'trustworthy'. It is clear that the staff have time to listen, to understand and meet the needs and wishes of young people. It is because sound attachments are made that a 'secure base' is established from which children and young people are able to take risks and try new experiences.

Young people spoke about learning life skills such as making your own bed and cooking, and of trying new sports and activities. Just as valuable is the unconscious learning that happens about being able to make choices, negotiating with each other and finding out what is acceptable behaviour in different situations. Thus meal times are organised, in the school particularly, to be as valuable for the social interactions that occur as they are for their excellent nutrition.

Unfortunately, on one evening lack of liaison with the school chef meant that chips were served both for lunch and the evening meal, leading to the young people not having the variety in their diet that is desirable.

Normally there are a wide variety of activities open to young people including the facilities of the main school such as the games room. Trips into the community are also made, to parks, restaurants and paid-for activities such as bowling. More expensive ones can be saved up for, so encouraging children and young people to do some simple budgeting and to delay gratification. Some of these would not be possible for them to do with their own families or carers for a variety of reasons and so are valuable experiences.

No sanctions have been applied while young people have been in residence. Staff take children aside if they think behaviour is getting out of hand and this has positive effect. Although house points can be awarded by staff in boarding the majority of the time good behaviour (especially kindness) is acknowledged by praise. At assembly on Fridays staff and pupils can give anyone in the school an award of 'top banana' for things such as conduct or effort. Some young people think this can be for trivial things but does give recognition for achievements that might also be significant.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The headteacher and staff are well aware of the vulnerability of children and young people in the school due to their diagnosis and level of functioning. They are therefore especially vigilant in their practice. All safeguarding policies and procedures have been reviewed since the last inspection with a view to tightening up practice as far as possible. This leads to continually high standards of practice. The designated officer of the local authority commented that staff, 'communicate well and seek advice appropriately. I have found them to be open to scrutiny and change where or if this was required. Safeguarding is taken very seriously in our opinion:' a view this inspection found to be accurate.

There are strong links to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), with one of their trainers seconded in the role of educational psychologist to the school. Mandatory and additional training that addresses the needs of the pupils at the school are provided on site. The head of care is also the 'Team Teach' trainer so training is delivered by people who know pupils well. Staff therefore are extraordinarily knowledgeable about the application of a range of matters as they apply to individual young people.

There have been no incidents of young people going missing or requiring a restraint since the last inspection. Bullying and conflicts are very infrequent with children spoken to saying they do not recall anything beyond name calling in residence. Much of this is due to the level of supervision but also the role modelling which staff display. They knew how to report bullying, including cyber bullying, and that they it would be regarded as a serious matter.

Children and young people say they are safe, a result of the attachment they have to staff. They are able to voice concerns about matters relating to residence, school or home life. This might be to staff they see day to day or to those designated as people to go to if they are worried. These are the staff seconded to the school rather than directly employed. The system works well in that children will ask for a consultation and this has resulted in disclosures of safeguarding issues outside of the school.

These matters are followed up thoroughly and procedures implemented. Records are detailed and staff input to plans and reviews of them helpful in reaching good outcomes.

Actions following on from meetings are focused on the needs of the child but with an eye on helping families to help children. Children's circumstances have improved as a result.

Governors play their role in monitoring the school's progress and safeguarding with regular unannounced visits and consideration of reports prepared by staff. All necessary protocols are in place to underpin safeguarding practice and are periodically reviewed by the board.

Individual plans and risk assessments are informed by members of the local child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and paediatric nursing service seconded to the school. There is a prompt response made to changes in circumstances that might require re-assessment of need. Arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are robust as is the practice of providing and recording first aid.

Rigorous health and safety checks are carried out by the school's premises manager and chef in their respective areas of responsibility. Both have an impressive commitment to the welfare of pupils. Inspections by agencies such as fire safety contractors and the Food Standards Agency have, however, marked the school down for minor omissions. These have no direct impact on children.

The age and grade 2* listing of the buildings brings particular challenges including long standing difficulties of damp in the kitchen. This results in patches of flaking paintwork; measures to counteract this have been employed so that it does not present a health risk but does need a long term solution. The dangers of the major renovation works have been particularly well managed through measures put in place to keep young people away from hazards and briefing of workers as to the kind of behaviours they may witness and methods to alert staff to any issues. As a result there has not been a single incident of any concern.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The school has been judged to be outstanding for several years, however, the headteacher and her staff have not been content to 'stand still' but demonstrate a desire to continually improve. Leaders and managers know the strengths and challenges of the provision and want to raise the bar. Recommendations made at the last inspection have been met and there was a keenness to benefit from any advice or suggestions made during this one.

Several amendments were made to policies, already recently reviewed, during the inspection. These include adding the procedure for the disposal of unused medication to the administration of medication policy and clarification about circumstances when it would be appropriate to enter a child's bedroom without their permission (for example, if self-harming was suspected). All were already accepted practice.

The headteacher provides inspiring leadership and has drawn together a team that believes strongly in the ethos of the school. She has a 'hands on approach' including spending time in the residential provision where she models excellent child care practice. There are high aspirations for children and young people across the range of their progress, socially and emotionally as well as academically.

The new residential team fully espouse these and are demonstrating that they are

continuing to be effective with high levels of satisfaction expressed by young people and by families. 'Parent view' responses indicate 100% of those who submitted replies agreed or strongly agreed with the statements 'My child enjoys boarding' and 'experience of boarding helps my child's progress and development'. 90% strongly agreed and 10% agreed that 'boarding is well organised and managed' – a result that improved with responses that came in during the inspection. Supervision agreements are in place and sessions organised.

A recent development has been the adoption of a framework that models barriers to learning for children and young people with autism. This allows staff to place pupils in one of four categories depending on the behaviours and attitudes they display and focuses efforts on assisting the young person to move up to a more receptive level. These efforts are not just in the classroom but on wider learning, developmental experiences and their context. It is possible to identify which pupils are likely to benefit most from boarding and so leads to more informed admission decisions.

A comparison of pupil's performance indicate the benefit of the experience of residence with those utilising it doing better at Key Stages than those with similar profiles who do not. Case examples also lend weight to the suggestion that young people who board are more resilient to the effects of detrimental life experiences.

The integration of residence in the life of the school is strong and allows for them to have a beneficial impact on the outcomes of both. As intimated, there are particularly effective relationships with CAHMS and health, but staff also work well with other agencies such as Children's Services and the LSCB. Local authorities are challenged where appropriate and paperwork, is chased when required, resulting in minutes being produced during the inspection.

Families are consulted through regular reviews and involvement in setting of individual Education Plan targets. They receive weekly phone calls or emails regarding their children's progress and information about home life, especially as it impacts on pupils, is gathered at the same time. Often parents will continue the strategies employed at school to promote consistency and progress.

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 exceeds the standard of good and results 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	1021002
Social care unique reference number	SC013056
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	12
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 18
Headteacher	Anne Pearce
Date of previous boarding inspection	15 January 2015
Telephone number	01865 558722
Email address	office.7002@woodeaton.oxon.sch.uk

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