

Wargrave House School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Jeffrey Banham
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Date of last inspection	10/11/2008

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a non-maintained special school that was established in 1971 for pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The school operates as a registered charity. It offers day, weekly and part-weekly residential provision. Residential facilities are to be found on site both in the school building and in the post-16 department.

The staffing structure of the school's residential facility consists of a head of care and deputy head of care and three team leaders. One of the team leaders is based the unit for older young people and the other two are in the main school building. One team leader is responsible for the extended evening and respite services. Waking night cover is provided throughout the provision. Direct support to families and carers is maintained by the school's full time family liaison worker. The Head and Deputy Head of Care and Director of Services/Head of Education provide the out-of-hours managerial duty cover.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This full inspection assessed all of the National Minimum Standards relating to residential special schools. All outcome areas are judged. Young people and their parents contributed to and participated in the inspection.

The school provides young people with high levels of care and support. It continues to be a model of good care practice. All aspects of its provision are high quality and are designed and operated with the primary aim of promoting the welfare and development of young people who have a wide range of needs. Staff are well trained, well supported and clearly committed to child-centred care. All staff throughout the school work together within the framework of detailed and effective care and support plans. These set out the needs and abilities of each young person and the support they need in order to enhance and promote their development.

Young people are cared for safely, by safe practices in a safe and attractive environment. Their emotional and physical health care is looked after by effective use of resources and the contributions of a wide range of staff. Parents are encouraged to be involved and staff work effectively with them to promote the needs of their children.

Staff provide young people with positive and practical support to enhance their communication and life skills and to prepare them for the transition to adulthood.

Outcomes for young people are demonstrably good and the school can evidence significant progress made by young people in its care.

Although the residential facility has consistently demonstrated high levels of care and practice over time staff remain committed to continuous improvement through quality assurance and monitoring of the ways in which the service is provided. There is a strong focus on continuing development of expertise and innovative practice to which all staff can and do contribute.

Parents are positive about the school and the work it does for their children. One said " I am delighted that my child attends the school both as a student and as a boarder. He has made tremendous progress in all areas relating to his disability. The establishment is very special and a very successful one. Long may it continue."

Improvements since the last inspection

At its last inspection the school was judged to be outstanding in all areas. No actions or recommendations were set.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff actively promote the health and well being of all the young people who stay at the school. Health care is given a high priority from the point of referral and admission. This is when staff work with parents and other professionals to obtain all the relevant information on each young person's health care needs and the treatments in which they are involved. Detailed health care plans are compiled from this information and subsequent assessments. These plans ensure that all staff are clear about the care and support they must provide to maintain and promote young people's health.

Parents remain fully involved throughout their child's stay. They provide written consent to enable their child to have any treatment or care they require. Regular communication between home and school ensures there is a full exchange of information about a young person's health and health care needs and this promotes continuity of care.

The key worker system ensures that young people have a person they know and trust and in whom they feel confident. Staff regularly review the health care plans to ensure progress is maintained.

Staff are well trained and have the skills they need to assist young people with a variety of needs. All relevant health care professionals are routinely involved in the provision of health care and reviews of progress. Speech and language therapists, for example, support the care of young people by assisting with the development of communication skills. Sensory co-ordinators provide advice and guidance on ways in which the emotional health of young people can be developed.

Staff are trained in the storage and administration of medication. The system for managing the administration of medication is extremely thorough and ensures that young people are given the medication they require in ways that are safe, effective and that enhance and promote their dignity.

Young people are supported to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise. Healthy eating is promoted at all times. Young people are involved in producing menus and in shopping for and cooking the meals that they eat. The "Looking good, feeling good" programme gives young people the chance to develop skills and awareness to take control of their own health care in so far as their needs and abilities allow. They clearly respond to and enjoy the support that staff provide throughout the day in line with the programmes that are set out for them and in which they are involved at every stage.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The policies and practices of the school ensure that the safety of young people is given the highest priority. The consideration of safe care is built in to all aspects of the school's activities. Each young person has his or her support plan that is based on a detailed knowledge of them, and their strengths and abilities. Staff use these plans to provide care that is sensitive, specific to each young person, and enhances and promotes their self esteem. The school does not have clear guidance, available to staff, parents and young people, on when it may be necessary to search a young person's possessions.

Young people know how to complain or to raise any concern they may have. One young person, for example, said " Yes. It's always being drilled into us. There are more people we can talk to than ever there will be things to complain about here." The school has detailed procedures for responding to any young person missing from school. There have been no recorded instances of such an event. The school is clear about and committed to the prevention of bullying. Young people said they are not bullied whilst at the school.

Safeguarding policies are detailed, thorough and reviewed regularly. Staff are trained in all aspects of procedure and practice relating to safeguarding issues and are clear about their responsibilities. Parents are confident that their children are safe when at the school. All activities for example are based on detailed and specific risk assessments. Each young person receives the support and supervision they require for all activities in and outside the school.

The school is committed to understanding and responding to young people's behaviour and this is a particularly strong feature of its operation. Young people's behavioural needs are effectively assessed and recorded. Staff operate within detailed and specific behaviour support plans that promote positive behaviour in a sympathetic and dignified fashion. They ensure that the care and safety of each

young person is central to all of the school's practices. Detailed recording and monitoring of progress enables care plans and support programmes to be modified as needed. Staff guide and respond to young people in line with the care plans and this evidently and clearly has a positive effect on the behaviour of the young people.

Young people live in an environment that provides physical safety and security. Designated staff take positive steps to keep young people and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards. Health and safety procedures are robust and managed efficiently and with extreme diligence. Fire drills are carried out regularly, but the recording of the drills does not provide specific information about the evacuations of the residential provision as opposed to the whole school.

Young people are supported by staff who are safe to work with them. The school recruits staff in accordance with agreed procedures and there is careful vetting and selection of staff and monitoring of visitors to the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have a comprehensive, thorough and well organised package of care that is based on the model of the "24-hour curriculum". This framework is created before admission and is continually updated, reviewed and revised. The care package involves all staff throughout the school so that young people have access to a range of resources that is structured to meet their needs.

Young people have many opportunities for their personal and educational development. Staff provide continuity and consistency of care and learning is built in to all activities throughout the day. Young people have access to staff who can help develop their communication skills, a factor that is central to their continued progress. The "whole school" approach means that there is a continuity of support throughout the period in which a young person is at the school. In addition to the resources available within the school additional psychological and psychiatric advice is provided from the community where this is deemed in the interests of particular young people. Local colleges and resources such as the Connexions service provide additional learning and support opportunities that give young people access to the greatest possible range of expertise to meet their needs and maintain progress.

Young people have access to a progressive and well structured activity and leisure programme. These activities make innovative use of a wide range of materials and resources. Young people are encouraged to be involved in as wide a range of activities as possible and to develop new interests appropriate to their strengths and needs. Highly structured and regular communication between residential and care staff means that any changes to young people's behaviour or the occurrence of significant events is taken into account by everyone who works with them.

The implementation of the school's "24-hour curriculum" ensures that the residential

provision actively supports young people's educational progress and that they receive individual support when they need it.

Helping children make a positive contribution

— The provision is outstanding.

— The foundations for the school's effective care and support of young people are laid at the time of admission. Staff collect detailed information from parents, other services and the school in order to make an assessment on which decisions about the suitability of any proposed placement both for the young person concerned and those already staying in the residential provision. Young people and their parents are provided with a sensitive and effective admissions process to enable young people to settle and feel safe and secure as soon as possible.

Young people are provided with a range of opportunities to develop their potential and work to their strengths. They have individualised support that is based on detailed assessments of need and ability. Staff work with young people to set them specific and measurable practical targets for behaviour, learning and communication. Care plans cover all aspects of behaviour and development. They are detailed, well presented and child-centred. The actions of staff ensure that the evaluation and monitoring progress of each young person remains at the centre of all the support young people receive.

The analysis of information relevant to the progress each young person makes means that there is highly effective monitoring and review of progress. This analysis gives the school the facility to adapt and review individual care plans and targets so that each young person can achieve their potential.

Young people have a range of opportunities such as student councils, student meetings and sessions with their key worker to comment on and contribute to their own development and plans and the overall running of the school. Young people have for example been instrumental in setting up a "drop in centre" one night a week at the school. One meeting of young people decided to ask for additional time for supervised access to the internet and this was agreed by senior managers after young people wrote to them.

Contact with parents is encouraged. The school sees itself as working for the "whole family" and promotes and encourages the involvement of parents and carers in all of the school's activities and support. Parents feel particularly welcome at and valued by, as one commented, "committed and caring staff".

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides considerable support to young people to prepare them for leaving the school and for the transition into adulthood. Staff work with placing authorities and local organisations such as Connexions and local colleges to mobilise and involve the greatest possible resources to assist young people in their progress away from the school. Detailed transition plans set out the support that each young person requires and the skills and knowledge they need to acquire to enable them to achieve their potential. Young people and their parents and carers are involved at every stage of the development and implementation of the plans. This enables young people to leave the school in a planned and positive manner.

Young people are supported to develop practical skills such as making their own beds, shopping and cooking where this is in line with their abilities and needs. Each young person is encouraged to develop skills and awareness of the world and people around them in order to prepare them as well as possible for life outside the school.

The residential accommodation is modern, attractive, well maintained and well equipped. Young people are able to live in an environment which enhances their self esteem and gives them a warm, homely and relaxing place in which to stay. Communal and private spaces are well furnished, decorated and equipped and provide young people with a welcoming and positive space that contributes to their well being. They have their own rooms which they can personalise and are proud to show off. Toilet and bathroom facilities are well furnished and equipped and give young people the opportunity to develop self care skills in privacy and with dignity.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Every aspect of the care provided by the residential facility is well managed. Residential care gives young people care and support tailored to meet their individual and specific needs. Staff work together as a team to provide an extensive range of resources based on detailed care plans. They have considerable expertise and experience in the conditions and needs relevant to the young people at the school. Whole-school working is a feature of the provision, as is the commitment to child-centred practice. Although the school has for some time been judged to offer excellent provision it still has a focus on and commitment to the development of its practice and continuous improvement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The focus of the school is the development of each young person's individual needs taking into account their abilities and circumstances. Staff have the highest possible aspirations for each young person and work with them to maximise and develop their potential.

Staff are well trained and well supervised and supported. They are aware of their responsibilities and are clearly committed to the young people with whom they work. Young people have the benefit of a warm and welcoming environment in which their needs and safety are given the first and highest priority.

Young people's records are detailed, well presented and demonstrate the esteem in which young people are held. The monitoring of all aspects of care and the practice of the residential facility is thorough and effective. It provides the opportunity for the review of all areas of work and provides the basis for change and improvement to which all staff can and do contribute.

Parents are clearly appreciative of the support they and their children receive. One parent, for example said "Our child has been staying at the school for over a year now. The support for us as a family has been invaluable but most importantly it has enabled her to develop as a young adult and to trust other people who care for her. This is vital for her future independence."

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that there is a clear guidance for young people, staff and parents on when it may be necessary to search a young person's possessions (NMS 3)
- review the recording of fire drills to provide information about evacuations of the residential provision.(NMS 26)