

Wargrave House School

SC022446

Wargrave House School, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 8RS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained special school, established in 1971, for students who have autistic spectrum disorder. The school operates as a registered charity (charity number 1104715). It offers a day school with 55 pupils currently on roll. It provides weekly and part-weekly residential boarding for up to six residential pupils at any one time who are aged from five to 19 years. Residential facilities are in Lakeside House.

The senior care manager has been in post for more than 10 years and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 July 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 1 May 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people experience many positive outcomes and opportunities during their stays at school. Staff provide high-quality and individualised care. This helps young people to make significant progress in learning independence skills. Parents gave many examples of the difference that staff have made to their child's happiness. This included improved emotional well-being and managing the changes that come with puberty. Staff see each young person as having unique needs for support. They promote equality of opportunity rather than see barriers to development.

The young people have very good relationships with the staff, who know them well. Their residential experience is a positive addition to their lives. Young people look forward to their stays and enjoy their time spent with friends. They choose the activities they want to attend, the food they eat, and how they relax. One parent said, '[X] has learned to choose, staff have set up his choices, and waited until he has chosen. This makes him feel that he matters; it has given him expectation.' Staff work hard to help young people to get the best possible outcomes during their stay.

Young people chatted to inspectors, some using communication technology to express their views. They were enthusiastic about their experiences. They told or showed inspectors about swimming and going for walks. They organised themselves to do jigsaws or listen to music. They were very enthusiastic about eating roast dinners out in restaurants. Staff think about the way they organise group activity, so that every young person takes part. They encourage young people to join in at their pace. Inspectors saw a woodland treasure hunt, where every young person was able to follow a trail and find the prize. This helps young people to overcome anxiety about trying new things. It builds their confidence and enriches their lives.

Other professionals who work with the young people spoke of the staff improving young people's lives. School makes a difference in helping young people plan for their futures. For example, school staff are an integral part of young people's transition to adult support services, which ensures continuity of knowledge about young people. It also means that young people continue to have their needs met when there is significant disruption in their lives. School provides creative opportunities, such as introducing young people to simple yoga. This helps young people to find ways of being calm.

Staff capture young people's aspirations in person-centred planning. The staff support them to experiment with communication methods. They encourage them to try a wide range of activities and learn new ways to manage their feelings. Residential staff contribute to multidisciplinary discussions and programmes about young people. This means that young people experience consistent support that meets their needs as staff carefully assess their starting points, support their development and respond to any difficulties. Young people recover well from any setbacks because staff take time to understand their changing needs.

Young people make clear progress in the areas set out in their education, health and care plans. This includes essential skills in preparation for adulthood and employment. For example, one young person wants to work in catering. He has made steady progress from making himself a cold drink, to helping to prepare an evening meal to share with friends. He is now working towards a food hygiene qualification. A parent said, 'Now he can contribute to family life, he makes me a cup of coffee when he is at home. I never thought he would be able to do that.'

All young people attend the on-site school or college. There is effective communication between all departments. Staff use a shared plan of care, health, education, communication and sensory support with positive results. The residential staff keep photographic and diary accounts of young people's experiences. This helps parents to understand how and where their child has progressed. There are plans to use the same approach as school to measuring progress. This will show the progress young people are making in a more measurable way.

Young people access the healthcare they need to stay fit and well. Staff promote healthy eating and exercise regimes. Many young people have complex health and developmental needs. Staff know how to promote their health and well-being. Clear emergency procedures are in place for those who need them. Staff do not always record behaviour that may be seizure activity. This limits information about minor changes in young people's health needs. The school nurse creates a comprehensive health passport for each young person. This ensures that essential and important information is shared at health appointments. The information is vital to a successful transition to adult health services. Parents praise staff for the 'faultless and daily' communication they provide about their child's well-being.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people stay in accommodation that is safe and welcoming. High staffing ratios mean that there is always someone on hand to promote young people's safety. The staff help the young people to become safer as they develop independence. Staff use clear, multidisciplinary risk assessments and support plans. They identify how young people's individual understanding, communication and behaviours will be best supported. Young people see staff model each activity. They practise key safety skills, such as using a knife or hot water, or crossing a road. Young people transfer their skills to school and home.

Young people respond well to individualised positive behaviour support programmes. They take part in activities that promote their sense of security and well-being. Staff provide support when young people become upset and their behaviour becomes unsafe. Staff use research-based support strategies to help young people learn about themselves and their emotions. This improves their ability to help themselves. Managers now analyse and identify possible triggers for behaviour. They make changes to young people's support plans as required. Young people use personalised strategies to help them to feel better. Restraints have reduced to a minority of

situations when all other support systems have been ineffective.

The school has appointed a new designated lead for safeguarding who has reviewed safeguarding processes. This review has resulted in the appointment of a senior residential manager as a deputy lead for safeguarding. The team meets regularly to share information, review causes for concern, and address any emerging issues. The staff and managers have had refresher training in safeguarding. There have been no concerns raised about the residential provision. Parents say that they are confident that their children are safe and happy. Young people show trust in staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There have been significant changes to the school's leadership team. A new chief executive officer will take up post at the start of the next academic year. New senior managers are working with the residential team to develop the monitoring and review of the residential provision. This has resulted in the residential service meeting all but one of the national minimum standards. Although this needs time to settle in, it is already having a positive effect, for example the improving management review of physical interventions. Further improvements are needed in this area to achieve legibility of all restraint records.

The organisation's philosophy of 'no limits' for young people helps to encourage managers and staff to have high aspirations for all. Governors and trustees support new initiatives to improve young people's lives. For example, they have improved the accommodation they offer to young people. They have part-funded a special trampoline so that young people can enjoy using an essential piece of sensory equipment. They take a keen interest in the residential provision. This includes making visits to the accommodation to meet young people. They review regular reports from the senior care manager about the residential service. The care manager is creating a residential development plan so that the residential staff's vision for continuous improvement is shared across school.

Managers and staff have good working relationships with the young people's families and other professionals. The managers and staff challenge other professionals when they need to. They help ensure that young people get the services and support that they need. A parent said, 'I can't thank [the residential staff] enough for the support that they have given us. They have helped us to make sense of the options available for our daughter as she moves to adult life.' Another parent said, '[The residential staff] are there for us. They go to health meetings if we need them, they go to transition planning meetings. They are like extra family members.'

The staff value the support that they get from managers and colleagues. Professional supervisions take place regularly. They have improved in reflection about young people and recognising the impact of any training. Care managers said that the relationships between all departments have improved. This has improved morale. Staff said that young people enjoy greater stability because staff absenteeism has

reduced.

There have been no complaints or safeguarding concerns raised about the residential provision. Records show that the school leaders have promptly responded to any complaints received. An ongoing staff disciplinary matter is being managed in line with government guidance and the school's policies. This does not affect the residential provision. There has been minor delay in notifying external safeguarding professionals. This has delayed routine external oversight of the school's actions.

The newly formed senior leadership team is working hard to promote continuous improvement in a residential service that has young people at the centre.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools:

- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. (NMS 12.6)

Recommendations

- Where necessary, staff record young people's behaviour that may be associated with seizure activity.
- The school ensures that any relevant information about staff disciplinary investigations is shared promptly with external safeguarding professionals.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC022446

Director of services: Simon Davies

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Denise Jolly, social care regulatory inspector

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