

Wargrave House School

449 Wargrave Road, Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside, WA12 8RS

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience/Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is an exceptional school offering the highest quality provision for students with autism spectrum conditions. As a result, they make outstanding progress from the time they join the school, particularly in their personal, social and communication development.
- The leadership of the head of education is outstanding. She and her highly-knowledgeable colleagues at all levels ensure the best possible practice to meet the needs of the students. At present, trustees are reviewing the management structure and this is temporarily holding up the appointment of staff across the school.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Students are continually assessed in order to plan next steps to challenge each individual to make the best progress they can in reading, writing and mathematics. Although the progress of individuals is monitored extremely well, senior leaders do not always collate the available data to have an overview of the progress of different groups of students.
- The teamwork of the therapists with school and residential staff is highly effective. Staff across all settings plan together and with parents to find consistent strategies and agree management plans. Their combined work prepares students extremely well for their future lives.
- Students in the sixth form college grow in maturity, enjoying a curriculum which helps them to develop excellent independence skills for their future lives.
- Students love coming to school. Although many are very anxious when they arrive at the school they quickly settle into the nurturing environment, feel very safe and display excellent attitudes to their learning.
- Parents are highly positive about the improvements they see in the lives of their children. Students themselves speak about how their lives have changed for the better since coming to Wargrave House.
- Staff manage students who experience behaviour difficulties associated with their autism with a high level of consistency, which ensures that learning is not disrupted for other students. Students learn how to manage their own behaviour through a sensitive and empathetic approach.
- Students who stay in the residential provision enjoy a wide range of activities which enrich their lives. Residential care staff liaise exceptionally well with school staff and therapists to ensure consistent management of students at all times. Links with parents are excellent.
- The school meets all of the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons, one of which was undertaken jointly with a senior leader.
- Inspectors examined samples of students' work in English and mathematics jointly with subject leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, care managers, therapists, subject leaders, the sixth-form lead, two trustees and a parent governor.
- A discussion was held with a group of students and inspectors talked with students informally about their work.
- Inspectors looked at 31 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire). Both the lead inspector and social care inspector also had telephone conversations with parents. The responses from the 60 staff questionnaires returned were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and boarding provision across the day and evening. They looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, curriculum and lesson plans, student support plans and individual progress files, documents relating to safeguarding and the online behavioural incident database.

Inspection team

Hilary Ward, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Hilton	Additional Inspector
Anne Bannister	Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wargrave House School and College is a non-maintained day and residential special school for students who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum condition. The majority of students have additional learning difficulties and disabilities and for some students, these learning difficulties are severe.
- Students come from local authorities across the north west of England. All have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Students are admitted from the age of five, but at the time of the inspection there were no students at Key Stage 1. The school does not admit children in the Early Years. Typical admission times are at Year 7 and Year 10.
- Almost half of the students are in the sixth-form provision known as Lakeside College.
- Typically for such schools, there are significantly more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is about the national average, but none of these are learning English as an additional language.
- Currently the school does not receive the pupil premium from any of the placing local authorities for any of its students. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or for those looked after by the local authority.
- Students who stay in the boarding provision do so for varying numbers of nights and for different lengths of time to meet their and their families' needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen leadership and management by:
 - finalising the staffing re-structure to make the necessary appointments at all levels
 - collating the data already held on individual students' progress to better demonstrate the achievement of different groups in the school as a whole.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The head of education provides exceptional leadership. She and her senior management team have a clear vision of best practice in autism spectrum conditions which has ensured the school's continued excellence since its previous outstanding inspection. Leaders and managers at all levels are reflective and evaluative about the impact of the provision on students' academic progress and well-being and clearly identify what is needed to further improve it.
- Some senior staff have recently left the school and trustees and governors are taking the opportunity to re-structure the management team. This is having a delaying effect on appointments at all levels and creating some uncertainty, both in the education and care settings. However, understaffing in some areas is currently being managed effectively enough so as not to have a negative impact on students and is expected to be resolved soon.
- Subject and senior leaders, together with classroom practitioners, monitor the progress of individual students rigorously, but do not always have such a clear overall view of the progress of different groups of students. Individual students are set challenging targets and progress towards these targets is checked regularly. The school is not currently in receipt of pupil premium for any of its students, but the very effective monitoring of individuals quickly identifies the underperformance of any disadvantaged student and appropriate action is taken. This is a potent example of the school's outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching exceptionally well and subject leaders have a very clear view of how well their subjects are being taught across the school through regular observations, work scrutiny and meetings with class teams. Robust arrangements for performance management are clearly linked to the national teachers' standards, to the school's improvement planning and to the professional development of staff to meet the specific needs of the students.
- Staff across the whole school benefit from the extensive professional development training provided, especially by the highly committed therapists on the staff. Therapy, nursing, school and residential staff form extremely effective teams, who together ensure the best autism practice at all times.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, but also very specific to the needs of these students. It results in outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with students developing strongly held views about right and wrong and about their own place in British society and with British values. Throughout the school there is an appropriate focus on the development of students' basic skills in English and mathematics. Their personal and social development needs are included and recognised in all lessons.
- There is an extensive programme of enrichment activities throughout the day, with gentle support for students to try something new. They have many opportunities to practise their skills in real-life settings in the community. For example, a Key Stage 4 group studied hazards and warning signs that might be found in a store and one student identified that 'hazardous substances could be at industrial levels'. They tested this theory out by visiting a local store to examine hazards at first hand.
- Links with parents are exceptionally strong. Parents are fully involved in their child's education and care and feel themselves to be extremely well supported by staff. Comments from parents were exceptionally positive, with many expressing the view that the school had saved their family life and their child's future chances.
- The small amount of primary sports funding the school receives is used very effectively. Additional staff have been trained so that more students can access rebound therapy and outside support has been commissioned to skill staff in the teaching of dance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide a good level of support and challenge to senior leaders. Each governor has a subject or pastoral link and meets regularly with the responsible staff member. Governors monitor the development plans for their link area and have a good knowledge of the achievement of individual students and the quality of teaching in their link subject.
 - Together with the trustees, governors monitor the finances of the school rigorously and fully undertake their responsibilities with regard to their statutory duties. The safeguarding and well-being of students is always of paramount concern. They ensure that arrangements for the performance management of senior leaders are fulfilled well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students usually join the school after experiencing difficulties in previous settings. Many have been out of school for long periods of time.
- Previous absence from school means that students often have a wobbly start when they arrive, but a highly consistent approach to behaviour management from all staff helps them to settle quickly. From these often difficult starting points, students develop extremely positive attitudes to their learning and incidents of challenging behaviour reduce.
- The input of the highly committed therapy and nursing team plays a crucial role in determining the best strategies and support to help students feel confident. The team approach across school and residence helps students to feel calm and confident so that they begin to make great strides in their personal and social development as well as in their academic achievements. Strategies are shared consistently between school and care staff and parents.
- All staff are highly skilled and very well trained to care, support and guide students in a nurturing environment. Occasional incidents in the classroom or around school or residence are managed calmly and consistently by staff to ensure minimum disruption to their learning and the learning of other students.
- Students develop an enormous pride in their school and college and this clearly grows as they move through the departments. They look after displays, enjoy recycling waste and fundraise for the school and for local charities. They are polite and courteous and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect. The school receives many positive comments from members of the local community and from work experience placements about the conduct of students when they go out.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Risk assessments are very thorough and reviewed regularly to make sure students are safe at all times, including on the frequent trips they make out into the community. The school carries out a great deal of work through its personal and social education programmes to help its vulnerable students understand potential risks in different settings.
- In a meeting with students they were able to talk knowledgeably and confidently about different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe, for example on the internet. Many talked about their own previous experiences of bullying, but were absolutely clear that they feel very safe in Wargrave House and are sure that trusted members of staff will help them to sort out any problems.
- Attendance is very high because students want to be in the familiar surroundings of school where they feel safe and happy.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching ensures that students make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development over time. As a result, leavers are confident and capable of using the skills they have acquired in their future lives.
- Planning of lessons is based securely on sound assessments of what students have learned to ensure that each of them can make the best progress they can, especially in their reading and mathematics. Students often find writing difficult, but staff deal with this very sensitively, providing students with charts, visual materials and prompts, which help them to make excellent progress from their starting points. The teaching of basic skills is incorporated into all subjects and builds rapidly on what students already know and can do.
- Activities and tasks are individualised as much as possible to interest and engage students and support their learning in all subjects. Staff are very creative in helping students to learn in ways which suit them best, for example, teaching students in different settings and positions when they are at their most receptive for learning.
- Staff encourage students to present their views and opinions clearly through sensitive questioning. In a sixth-form lesson, students were considering topics to present a case for and against. There were some very thoughtful suggestions such as 'Does technology make us lazy and antisocial?' The group voted democratically for 'Is graffiti vandalism or art?' Students were encouraged to research and explore these ideas for themselves and then to present them to the rest of the group.
- Therapists work closely with teachers and teaching assistants as highly effective teams to make sure that students are able to communicate in whatever way suits them best. Together they assess students' progress in lessons and discuss strategies to promote learning. In whole group sessions staff ensure that all students are involved and participating.

- Many of the students at Wargrave House are particularly skilled in computing and this is taught exceptionally well, both as a stand-alone subject and as a tool to develop skills in other areas.
- Students know how well they are doing and are very clear about next steps. Teachers and teaching assistants review a student's progress with them at the end of each lesson and agree the next steps they should take to improve their work further. Students are very proud of their achievements and these, together with their targets, are marked on a simple chart and reviewed at the beginning of the following lesson to remind students what they have to do next.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Evidence from students' individual progress files, observations of their progress in lessons and detailed examination of their work, demonstrate that students of all abilities are making outstanding progress over time.
- The barriers to their learning which their autism presents mean that students are unlikely to be working at levels expected for their age. At whatever age students join the school, almost all have low starting points. However, they settle quickly and begin to make rapid progress in an environment which is well-suited to their needs and with highly-knowledgeable staff who understand their learning needs very well.
- Robust monitoring and on-going assessment make sure that all students are challenged to make at least the progress expected of them and many exceed it. As a result, they make outstanding progress in their use of English and mathematics for everyday purposes and practise these skills in all subjects. Students are organised in teaching groups where there are high expectations for the most able to make the rapid progress of which they are capable while those of lower ability are supported to enjoy success in their activities. By the time they leave school or college, students have all obtained external qualifications which reflect their differing abilities appropriately.
- Students also make huge strides in their personal and social development. With the support of staff they learn excellent coping strategies to manage their own anxieties and behaviours and become confident and articulate young people. The development of good communication is at the core of all the school does. The journey students make from their starting points is often remarkable with many parents testifying to the impressive developments their children have made personally, socially and academically.
- The school is not currently in receipt of pupil premium from local authorities and students who may be eligible for free school meals are not able to be identified as a separate group. Nevertheless, all students, including the small number of girls, those from ethnic minorities and children looked after by the local authority, do equally well, because student achievement is monitored so robustly on an individual basis by the multi-disciplinary teams.
- Students in the sixth form college make excellent progress in developing their independence and learning about the world of work. They and Key Stage 4 students enjoy work experience placements which are well-matched to individual needs and interests. Sometimes these lead to work opportunities when students leave. Employers make extremely positive comments to the staff about the excellent work ethic the students demonstrate.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- There are almost as many students in the sixth form college as in the rest of the school. Provision and outcomes for students are equally outstanding and the majority of students choose to stay at Wargrave House for the college provision, if funding allows.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and therapists are highly skilled at developing a curriculum which moves learning on and is well suited to the needs of individuals. Programmes are often very personalised. The focus of the learning is on ensuring that students are well prepared for their future lives and work is planned across college and residence to support this outcome. Students practise simple day-to-day skills, such as making beds, serving meals, shopping and cooking food.
- Through activities such as a mini enterprise making Christmas gifts, students put their calculation and budgeting skills into practice, use their literacy skills to make posters and cards and their communication skills to canvass the views of potential customers in the school. Next steps are planned to extend this out into the community, with students manning a stall at the local leisure centre as they grow in confidence.
- Resources to support the learning of independence and life skills are excellent. Students thoroughly enjoy moving on to the sixth-form college and have excellent attitudes to their learning.
- The sixth form is led exceptionally well. Programmes are extremely well planned to match the interests

and abilities of individual students and ensure that all students, including those who are disadvantaged or from the minority groups, achieve exceptionally well. Students understand they are being prepared for the world of work and participate enthusiastically in evaluating their own successes and what more they could do to achieve external awards and successful work placements.

Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care	is outstanding
Boarders' safety/Residential pupils' safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of boarding provision/Leadership and management of the residential provision	are outstanding

- The experience of boarding and the high quality of care provided make an exceptional impact on the social, cultural and emotional development of residential students. Staff are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to support residential students and their high aspirations lead to excellent progress being made.
- A highly personalised, sensitively managed induction process supports residential students' induction into and on from their residential placement. A parent commented positively 'I cannot fault the transition process. It has been progressed at a pace my child can cope with. Staff have been phenomenal in the manner in which they have quickly established a relationship of trust and confidence that has enabled significant progress to be made in a short space of time. They have given us our family life back'. Excellent staff practice in supporting young people in transition was also affirmed by a care worker from a future placement who was on site working alongside residential and day staff. She said 'They have all been brilliant in supporting us to get to know the young person. This helps us to reduce his anxiety about moving on from this residential placement'.
- Residential students' dignity and privacy is protected at all times. A comprehensive range of risk assessments relating to individual students, the site and activities keep residential students safe. Residential students' safety and well-being is of paramount importance. Residential students do not identify bullying as an issue of concern and know that staff will take immediate and effective action to resolve any issues that may arise. There are clear, detailed safeguarding policies and procedures which are known and implemented by staff when situations arise. Outstanding practice ensures that residential students' safety and well being is very effectively promoted at all times.
- A significant strength of the service is residential staff's commitment to enabling students to manage their own behaviour. Staff are highly skilled at defusing situations before they escalate, enabling young people to re-engage positively in activities that they enjoy. Residential students receive substantial guidance and support on how to sustain positive behaviour, both in school and in the wider community. This positive input enables residential students to make positive choices that significantly improve outcomes for their future.
- Health care arrangements are highly effective in promoting residential students' physical and emotional health. There is excellent inter-agency working to ensure that the holistic needs of students are recognised and addressed. Detailed health plans are extremely well supported by a qualified school nurse and parents are very appreciative of his support. Residential students fully enjoy their boarding experience and take every opportunity to participate in a range of stimulating extra-curricular and leisure activities matched to their ages, interests and needs. Targets are set for each residential student which are shared with school and support residential students' academic and personal progress. Residential students are exceptionally well supported to develop their social skills; independent living skills; problem-solving abilities and to develop their emotional well-being and ability to think independently. A parent said 'My child had no social life before their placement. Now she looks forward to planned activities she can share with friends. Staff are achieving some amazing things with her'.
- The residential provision is well managed in a manner that promotes the best interests of residential students. Self-evaluation by managers and trustees drives forward continued improvement. The rigorous implementation of a comprehensive development plan ensures that residential students continue to benefit from the care of the committed and enthusiastic staff team.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	134888
Social care unique reference number	SCO22446
Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	448161

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision 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	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	23
Number of boarders on roll	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Duncan
Headteacher	Gennie Hyde
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
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