

West Kirby Residential School

107–119 Meols Drive, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside CH48 5DH

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

West Kirby Residential School is a non-maintained special educational needs school and college for young people, who may have autism and/or have complex and significant emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many of the young people also have additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school provides residential accommodation.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 February 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 20 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Residential pupils make good progress from their individual starting points, due to the well-planned care that they receive from staff.
- Residential pupils learn new skills and develop confidence through attending a wide range of activities specific to their individual needs and interests.
- Residential pupils and their parents feel that staff keep young people safe.
- Risk management in the residential provision is effective.
- Staff have an innovative approach to behaviour management, which is effective in helping young people learn to manage their own feelings and behaviour.
- Multi-agency work within the setting is a strength and contributes to residential pupils making progress.
- Residential pupils are looked after by a longstanding and experienced team of staff who are consistently child-centred in their approach.
- Feedback from parents and residential pupils is positive about the level of care and how this supports progress.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Monitoring arrangements are not always effective.
- A shortfall was identified in staff's understanding of young people who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This limits staff's ability to fully support residential pupils to explore this aspect of their identity.
- Risk assessments do not always include up-to-date information about young people.
- Restraint records are not clear accounts, which limits the scrutiny of restraint and reflective practice.

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(s) for residential special schools:

- 19.1 Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. This is in respect of training to address staff's understanding of young people who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Recommendations

- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Residential pupils make good progress in all areas of their development, due to the care and support that they receive from staff. Residential pupils make good progress at school. This is because there is good partnership working between residential and school staff. There is a crossover between residential and school staff, with some residential staff working in the school and vice versa. This and regular meetings between the settings ensures that residential pupils receive consistency across both settings and this supports their educational progress.

The school has a highly effective health department that supports residential healthcare practice, where it is necessary to do so regarding specialist support, and, more generally, with emotional well-being. As a result, residential pupils become increasingly healthier, both in respect of their emotional and physical health. Residential pupils spoke about making healthier food choices due to the support of staff. Several residential pupils spoke about the staff's approach to helping them reduce their anxieties.

Residential pupils identify trusted relationships with staff and these relationships support young people's progress. The key-worker system is a real strength. Residential pupils spoken with as part of the inspection were complimentary about their key-workers and the support that they offer. Staff have a clear understanding of the needs of children with autism and will tackle other areas that affect independence and well-being through direct work and a multi-agency approach.

Each residential pupil has a clinical profile in place, based on an assessment from the therapy service, and this plan underpins each residential pupil's care. Staff identify short-term targets for each residential pupil based on their education, health and care plans and these are subject to regular review. This joined-up approach leads to residential pupils receiving well-planned individualised care, which supports their progress.

Multi-agency working within the setting is a strength. Specialist resources are available on-site and staff utilise these in their work with residential pupils. The therapy service, education, health and residential staff communicate effectively to ensure that residential pupils receive a holistic approach to their care.

Staff support residential pupils to develop the skills that they will require for adulthood. Residential pupils are supported to obtain a recognised qualification in life skills. Staff promote safety in the community in a way which helps young people develop independence and take risks in line with their development. This help is extended to helping parents support residential pupils with their emerging independence in areas such as relationships.

Staff encourage residential pupils to access activities based on individual interests.

The move to residential settings in the community has enhanced opportunities for accessing community resources, and there was evidence of this seen during the inspection, such as supporting residential pupils to attend the gym in the local community.

Transitions are managed well. There is a transitions officer in post, whose role is to support residential pupils with transitions. She works successfully, not only with the range of colleagues in school, but also with external providers and parents to ensure that young people are well prepared for transitions. The therapy service also supports transitions well. For example, for one residential pupil staff made a bespoke booklet to prepare him for a move into another home.

Residential pupils are given plenty of opportunities to make decisions about their care. If they raise any issues, these are addressed promptly and appropriately. As a result, residential pupils have not needed to complain, but they are aware of how to do so should they need to. There is an independent visitor available to residential pupils.

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

Residential pupils feel that staff help keep them safe and help them with their behaviour. This view is mirrored by parents. The overall approach to safeguarding is practical and effective, with evidence of good collaboration between remits and thoughtful, child-focused decision-making.

Staff ensure that residential pupils have individual risk assessments in place. These are reviewed and updated but they do not always contain up-to-date information about residential pupils' risks. There is a disjointed approach to the assessment of residential pupils' vulnerabilities, which means that staff do not always get clear guidance on managing known risks. There is a reliance on informal exchange of information rather than formal plans. Effective safeguarding practice is achieved, but this is achieved through informal routes rather than the formal plans.

Staff understand and manage behaviour well. There are good systems in place to promote positive behaviour, such as the gold award system. This is an innovative system, which is child-focused, bespoke to individual residential pupils and effective in promoting positive behaviour. There is focus on helping residential pupils understand themselves. There is some good work undertaken, which supports residential pupils with self-regulation and residential pupils recognise the impact of this on their behaviour.

Given the complexities of the residential pupils' needs, there is a low level of restraint used in residential provision. Staff know how to use diversionary tactics as their primary way of helping residential pupils to remain in control of their behaviour. When restraint is carried out, it is low-level physical intervention. Restraint records, however, are not always clear accounts, which leaves gaps in the records. This inconsistent recording limits the scrutiny of restraint and does not always evidence

that residential pupils are offered a debrief after they have been subject to a restraint.

Residential pupils do not go missing from the residential provision. However, staff understand the actions they should take should a residential pupil go missing. Staff have a good awareness of risks that residential pupils face and are proactive in supporting them to develop an awareness of these risks and how to keep safe in the community.

All staff receive regular safeguarding training and, as a result, staff understand the correct procedure to follow should a safeguarding issue arise. Any allegations made are shared with appropriate agencies and dealt with appropriately.

The school operates good-quality recruitment practice that is in line with guidance and safeguards residential pupils.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a restructure in the management arrangements for the residential provision since the last inspection. These changes are in the early stages. However, there is emerging good practice in the leadership and management of the residential provision. The managers in post are experienced and have the required qualifications for the role.

The provision is appropriately staffed by an experienced and stable staff team. Staff like working in the residential provision and feel well supported in their roles. Supervision is thorough and the frequency of supervision for residential staff has increased. Staff are child-centred and have high expectations for residential pupils in supporting them to manage and understand their autism. All teams work collaboratively to provide consistency and stability for residential pupils.

Staff receive a good range of training relevant to their roles. Opportunities for multi-remit training underpin the whole-school approach. There is a good system in place to record and monitor staff training, and this is used as a tool to feed into staff appraisals. This could be further developed to include overall practice reflection and a clearer evaluation of the effectiveness of training opportunities.

A shortfall was identified in the staff's understanding of residential pupils who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and there is a need for further training for staff in this area. This lack of understanding inhibits the staff's ability to fully support residential pupils' exploration of that aspect of their identity. A requirement was made to address this shortfall.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of residential pupils and their plans. There are good systems in place to monitor residential pupils' progress, and leaders challenge placing authorities when necessary, for example if education, health and care plans are not up to the required standard.

Monitoring arrangements for monitoring the quality of care are not always consistent. There have been new systems put in place for monitoring since the last inspection but the efficiency of these varies. Follow-up of actions from governor visits are not always acted on as promptly as they could be. This inconsistency inhibits the rate of improvement of the residential provision.

A real strength, however, is effective working relationships that support residential pupil's progress. Most parents were positive about communication and the support that they receive from staff. Comments from parents obtained during the inspection included, 'I wouldn't want him anywhere else', 'she has achieved things I never thought she would achieve' and 'communication is excellent'.

Surveys identified one person who did not feel consulted, but the inspectors did not find evidence of that in the feedback that they obtained. Leaders had put systems in place to obtain their own feedback and during the inspection they were awaiting their own consultation response. There is less evidence of strong community relationships and this could be developed further.

Leaders have taken effective action to address the areas of development identified at the last inspection. This demonstrates that they learn from feedback and are committed to improving the quality of the service and the care that residential pupils receive. Leaders have implemented localised development plans since the last inspection. These are live documents, which are focused on the experiences and care of young people.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC018958

Headteacher/teacher in charge:

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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