

# Whitstone Head School

Whitstone Head School, Whitstone, HOLSWORTHY, Devon, EX22 6TJ

## Inspection dates

01/04/2014 to 03/04/2014

## Overall effectiveness

**Adequate**

**55**

Outcomes for residential pupils

Adequate

3

Quality of residential provision and care

Adequate

3

Residential pupils' safety

Adequate

3

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Adequate

3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is adequate because

- Parents, carers and residential pupils hold the school in high regard. They say the impact that boarding at the school has had on individual pupils is positive. Residential pupils develop their confidence, self-esteem, sense of self-worth and independence.
- Boarding is well organised, with effective links between academic and residential staff. All staff know the residential pupils well and make them feel valued. Staff morale has improved since the previous inspection and staff are now clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- The school safeguards residential pupils. Residential pupils said they felt safe boarding at the school. This is underpinned by effective multi-agency working by staff to identify safeguarding and child protection concerns at an early stage.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity, regardless of the diverse or complex individual care needs of residential pupils, is fundamental to the ethos of the school.
- Residential pupils benefit from recent work undertaken by the head of care to improve the monitoring of care practices and outcomes for residential pupils achieved as a result of boarding. Robust quality assurance systems have been introduced to improve the quality of care provided in the boarding provision of the school.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of the first day of the inspection, discussions were held with boarding staff, education staff, head of care, head teacher, parents, trustees and boarders. Care plans, risk assessments, policy and other documents were scrutinised, meals were sampled. A tour of the 3 boarding houses was undertaken.

## Inspection team

Christina Maddison	Lead social care inspector
Paula Lahey	Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Whitstone Head School is a non-maintained residential special school providing education for 37 pupils aged between 10 and 18 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Currently the school is able to provide boarding for up to 32 residential pupils.

The school is run as a specialist centre providing education to national examination level allowing access to further education and employment. The school works to the National Curriculum and has a programme of outdoor education and outdoor pursuit activities.

The school is situated on the edge of Whitstone village in Devon. It comprises a large country house and grounds with an adjacent education building and gymnasium. Two attached buildings, situated in the grounds, have been converted into three boarding houses.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure health care plans document how staff are to meet identified care needs relating to sexual health and sexual identity.
- ensure risk assessments document control measures in relation to all identified risks.
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
  - All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Adequate

Residential pupils benefit from boarding at the school. They develop social relationships and learn independent living skills. Residential pupils have diverse and complex care needs but are tolerant of each other, have made friendships as a result of their residential experience and have improved relationships with their families.

Residential pupils make progress in all areas of their lives. For example, residential pupils learn how to behave appropriately, learn to take turns, promote fairness and consider other people's views. Residential pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem as a result of boarding. They become more independent and transfer these skills to the family home environment. One parent said 'I can't praise the school enough. They have turned my child around. They have taught them so much and they have helped my child so much to deal with social pressures.'

Residential pupils enjoy a healthy diet, healthcare needs are met and residential pupils engage in a range of activities in and outside of the school. By participating in activities, residential pupils learn social skills and channel their energy positively. Residential pupils benefit from the trusting and positive relationships they enjoy with staff. As a result of the residential provision putting a recent focus on pathway planning and transition, all residential pupils who are leaving in the summer term have an identified plan for the future.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Adequate

Residential pupils benefit from a committed and caring staff team who offer good quality support that enables them to make progress in all areas of their lives. Care plans have recently been reviewed and re-written and now offer staff clear guidance about how best to support residential pupils. The head of care and care staff have worked hard to improve care plans, which now document termly targets and aims for each residential pupil which are regularly reviewed and updated. This means it is now possible to identify the progress and areas of development for each residential pupil. These systems have yet to fully embed as they have only recently been introduced.

Parents are extremely positive about the care offered at the school. One parent said 'I am confident that when my child is boarding at the school staff meet their needs and keep them safe and they have developed social and independence skills.' Another parent commented 'Communication from the school is very good, they keep me informed about my child and are always available to offer advice and help.'

Residential pupils are supported to develop their independent living skills. For example, residential pupils are able to cook their own meals, travel independently to shop in nearby towns, undertake their own laundry and visit friends in the community. Pathway plans and independent living plans document progress residential pupils are making with developing their skills and what they need to learn next.

Residential pupils commented positively about meals provided at the school. Healthy eating is encouraged and specific diets relating to health and cultural needs are catered for. Meal times are a relaxed and sociable occasion where staff and residential pupils eat together and share the serving of food and clearing tables after meals.

Health care needs of residential pupils are fully met. Staff are knowledgeable about individual health care needs and how these will be met. Residential pupils have access to specialist health care professionals such as speech and language therapists and psychologists. Details of how the

sexual health care needs and needs relating to sexual identity of residential pupils will be met are not documented. However, staff are aware of how to meet these needs. The arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are robust and ensure the safety of residential pupils.

The boarding houses are generally well maintained and are clean. Residential pupils personalise their bedrooms with posters and their possessions. Lockable storage is available in bedrooms to safely store personal and valuable items. Residential pupils are able to make telephone calls in private and are also able to contact their families on their mobile telephones. One residential pupil said 'I love my bedroom, I can put up my posters and put things where I like.'

Views of residential pupils are taken seriously and acted upon. Residential pupils can put forward their views and ideas in regular meetings, suggestion boards and in key worker sessions. For example, residential boarders suggested the evening meal time was too early. As a result of staff listening to these views, mealtimes have been altered to later in the evening.

Residential pupils enjoy a wide range of activities on the school campus and in the community. Activities include walking, youth club, keep fit, art activities and use of the gym. This means residential pupils keep fit, make friends and develop their social skills.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Adequate**

Residential pupils feel safe when they are boarding at the school. Risk assessments are in place for the buildings, individual pupils and activities. Risk assessment have been revised and now offer a clear assessment of identified individual risks. However, control measures for each identified risk are not documented. However, staff are clear about how they would manage each risk and therefore the lack of this documentation does not have a serious impact on the safety of residential pupils. Residential pupils are able to learn from taking assessed and managed risks such as walking to the local shops on their own.

Residential pupils said bullying is not an issue at the school and all residential pupils are able to identify an adult they would go to if they felt bullied. Staff are clear that physical restraint is only to be used as a last resort to promote the safety of residential pupils and others. Incidents of physical restraint are minimal and comprehensively recorded. Residential pupils said sanctions given are fair and helped them to learn. Parents commented positively about how boarding at the school has helped their children improve their behaviour. One parent said 'every time my child comes home for the holidays I can see the improvements in their behaviour.'

Complaints are effectively dealt with through an accessible complaints procedure. Residential pupils receive a comprehensive response to any complaints they make. A strength of the school is how any safeguarding or child protection concerns are identified and managed. The head of care has excellent links with the Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding and the local child safeguarding board. Residential pupils do not go missing from the school and there are robust procedures in place for staff to follow if a residential pupil is missing.

Staff recruitment policies and procedures are effectively implemented and ensure the safety of residential pupils. Staff confirmed that they were required to provide character references and identity checks prior to starting employment at the school. Agency staff are checked by their agency prior to working in the school to ensure they are suitable to work with the residential pupils.

Arrangements for maintaining the physical safety of the boarding houses are robust. For example, electrical and gas appliances, fire equipment and alarms are regularly tested for their

effectiveness. Residential pupils know how to evacuate the boarding houses in the event of a fire.

### **Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate**

The residential provision of the school is adequately led and managed. The previous inspection of the residential provision of the school was judged to be inadequate. In response, the head of care and the trustees have undertaken a comprehensive review of the strengths and areas for improvement of the residential provision of the school. An action plan was produced and a programme of improvement has been undertaken. New and improved systems and procedures have been put in place that are beginning to embed and be established, such as clear staff roles and responsibilities which staff fully understand. Staff morale has improved and staff comment that they are more motivated and clear about the aims of the residential provision. Clear routines for the residential provision are in place that run smoothly and are understood by all of the residential pupils and staff.

Sufficient staffing is in place to ensure the care needs of residential pupils are fully met. Staff are well trained and supervised to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to meet the diverse and complex care needs of residential pupils. Supervision arrangements are not in place for the head of care and agency staff. This means they are not receiving the professional support necessary to undertake their roles.

Education and residential staff liaise effectively to ensure the 24 hour curriculum is implemented in the school for residential pupils. Communication is undertaken before and after the school day between academic and care staff who work closely together. This means residential pupils benefit from staff who are well informed and provide consistent support.

Quality monitoring systems have been introduced to improve the quality of care provided in the residential provision. Trustees regularly visit the provision and provide written feedback including actions required to address any shortfalls found during their visit. These visits also provide residential pupils with an independent person to talk to and raise any concerns with if they wish.

## What inspection judgements mean

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134062
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC041515
<b>DfE registration number</b>	908/7001

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	8
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David McLean-Thorne
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	17/09/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01288 341251
<b>Email address</b>	whitstonehead@btconnect.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

