

Walworth School

Walworth School, Bluebell Way, NEWTON AYCLIFFE, County Durham, DL5 7LP

Inspection dates	22/10/2014 to 24/10/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils greatly enjoy their time in residence. The wide range of activities available to them are stimulating and promote their self-esteem.
- Care staff are highly experienced, skilled, and committed to the welfare of residential pupils. As a result, residential pupils make good progress in all areas of their lives. The improvements that residential pupils make in social relationships and self-reliance are particularly noteworthy.
- Extremely effective behaviour management underpins the success of the residential provision. The absence of bullying and other behaviour which may threaten children's well-being means that residential pupils are, and feel, exceptionally safe.
- The residential provision is very well managed and maintained. This results in an orderly and productive atmosphere where the diverse needs of all residential pupils are met effectively.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was given notice of the inspection three hours before it commenced. The inspector visited the residential unit and spent time with residential pupils and staff. Inspection activities included: observation of practice within the house; discussion with residential pupils individually and as a group; and meetings with the headteacher, the manager of the residential provision and a number of staff, including support staff. The inspector also scrutinised school policies, records, and residential pupils' case files.

Inspection team

Nicholas Murphy

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Walworth School is a maintained residential special school which provides education and residential care for boys and girls of primary and junior school age, who have a statement of special educational needs and emotional or behavioural difficulties. The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of Newton Aycliffe. Acorn House, the residential provision, is located behind the main school. The number of children residing at the school each night may vary and they stay for two to four nights each week. The school does not provide residential care at weekends or during school holidays. The maximum number of children that may reside at the school is 10 and the maximum number of children receiving education is 72. The residential provision was last inspected in July 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Amend the format of the sanction record to ensure that the evaluation of the effectiveness of each sanction is clearly described.
- Provide more detail in the school's residential rationale document about the arrangements for care planning and the role of the key worker.
- Consider the provision of formal external specialist support for new staff undertaking induction work and NVQ qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good.

Residential pupils have very good relationships with staff and are clearly relaxed and trusting in their company. Residential pupils happily seek staff out when they need help, for example, in making sure they look their best for school. One child said, 'I like the other kids and I like all the staff. If I had a problem I could talk to any of the staff.' The current group of residential pupils is diverse and spans a wide age range. Despite this, they are developing a tolerance of the needs of others and beginning to understand and make allowances for the differences between people.

Residential pupils are becoming more confident in their own skills. They are able to undertake morning routines of rising, showering and dressing with only minimal support from staff. Many have increased their ability to manage their own self-care tasks, for example, using cutlery properly. They are also developing better self-esteem, taking pride in their achievements both in the classroom and in what they do in their leisure time. Residential pupils are more confident in conversation, and for the most part have acquired a better understanding of how to operate within a group. For example, some residential pupils who initially were very self-centred and demanding have learnt to take turns, to be patient, and respect the rights of others.

The residential community is, overall, a happy one. When asked how many marks out of ten he would give to residence, one child said, 'a thousand'. Residential pupils are kept busy, with a wide choice of activities both within the school and in the community. One residential pupil said, 'The best thing about staying here is the activities and things like the relaxation time and television.' Activities in the community include roller-blading, swimming, and visiting a highly energetic indoor play area. In-house pastimes range from arts and crafts and board games to gym sessions and music. Bingo is a particular favourite, combining the excitement of waiting for needed numbers to be called with the attraction of a small but sought-after prize!

Although residential pupils are comparatively young in years, their opinions are valued by the school. As a result, residential pupils are able to exercise choice in a variety of ways. For example, regular house meetings discuss such topics as leisure pursuits and menu preferences. There is a residential pupil who represents the group on the wider school council. And, the colour schemes and furnishings of recently refurbished bedrooms have been heavily influenced by the views of residential pupils.

Residential pupils are in good health. Their access to activities enhancing physical fitness, nutritious food, and the close oversight of staff helps them to maintain their well-being. In addition, those with emotional and psychological need are able to benefit from the support provided by specialist services in the community.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of care received by residential pupils is good.

Care staff provide an excellent level of care to residential pupils. They have detailed knowledge of each child's needs and are constantly vigilant of interactions within the group. They provide the right balance of nurturing, supervision, and support to each and every residential pupil. Communication between care and education staff is well embedded, ensuring that issues arising in one setting for a particular child can be addressed if necessary in the other.

Each residential pupil has a support plan which is detailed and updated at regular intervals. This

helps to ensure consistency of approach across the staff group, for example in how to respond to each child in order to promote their social development and learning. It also ensures that plans used in day-to-day living are consistent with educational plans and, where necessary, local authority care plans.

Care staff understand the importance of the leisure activity programme in developing the interests and well-being of residential pupils. They manage the often competing preferences of children with skill and diplomacy. They also review and evaluate each activity, to ensure that children derive the greatest benefit from them while not compromising the welfare of the wider group.

Staff promote the health of residential pupils effectively. Plans detail the individual needs of each child and how they will be met. For example, one residential pupil for whom there are concerns about his rate of growth has his height and weight checked regularly. Staff can raise any issues about children's emotional health in regular meetings with parents and other professionals. This enables them to make referrals to child and adolescent mental health services and other agencies providing support in this area.

Food for residential pupils is plentiful and nutritious, with ample choice. Kitchen staff are able to provide special diets to cater for such requirements as nut allergies. Care staff ensure that meals provide opportunities for residential pupils to learn socially acceptable ways of behaving and to show consideration to each other.

The residential accommodation is warm and comfortably furnished. As in the rest of the school, it is spotlessly clean. Children's artwork adorns the walls, creating a bright and welcoming impression. A programme of refurbishment of the bedrooms has commenced, bringing the decoration and furniture more up to date. The importance that all staff attach to maintaining and improving the quality of accommodation conveys the message to residential pupils that they are valued.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The residential provision is outstanding at keeping residential pupils safe.

The effectiveness of the school's absolute commitment to safeguarding is reflected in the feeling of safety as expressed by residential pupils. One said, 'There's no bullying here. Any problems and the staff will sort them out.' Another commented, 'I feel safe all the time.' Staff at all levels have an excellent understanding of safeguarding practice and procedures. This enables them to recognise any concerns and to notify them to the appropriate agencies. Measures to combat other threats to children's safety, such as bullying or going missing, are well documented in procedures and implemented in practice. Measures to keep the building physically secure combine with staff's comprehensive oversight and awareness to ensure that children do not go missing. There has been only such incident since the last inspection.

The residential provision promotes a culture where children are encouraged to voice any concerns they may have. Information is prominently displayed throughout the building giving details of how children can contact people outside the school if they need to.

Staff are relentless in their promotion of good, considerate behaviour by residential pupils. They consistently monitor how children interact with each other and take care to praise any example of positive behaviour, such as a small kindness expressed by one for another. Equally, any sign of potentially unkind, irritating or malicious behaviour is immediately addressed in a low-key and thoughtful way which avoids more serious conflict and restores harmony. For example, children who sit too closely to each other on the settee are gently reminded to give themselves more

space.

Staff benefit not only from their substantial experience in working with children in this setting but also regularly refreshed training in behaviour management. They also follow effective plans, tailored to each child, which set out how best to respond when that child is distressed or angry. When physical restraint is necessary to ensure safety, it is used appropriately and recorded in detail. Post-incident, staff help children to reflect on their behaviour and discuss more acceptable ways of dealing with strong emotions. Residential pupils can see the difference that this approach makes, one saying, 'Being here helps me to behave better.' Sanctions are used relatively sparingly. Although in general they are recorded accurately, the evaluation of each sanction's effectiveness is not always sufficiently clear.

Recruitment procedures are very robust, and follow statutory guidance to ensure that only people who are suitable to work with children are employed. The management of the safety of the site in general is excellent, with all checks on equipment and services taking place at the required intervals. The arrangements for fire safety are similarly meticulous.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good.

The school's Statement of Purpose makes clear the importance of the residential provision in contributing to the life of the whole establishment. There is also a 'rationale' document which describes the residential provision in more detail. This is useful, but unfortunately does not explain the good work that staff do in drawing up and implementing the plans which are tailored to each residential pupil. It would be helpful for parents and others to be aware of the work of care staff in this area.

The head of care is an effective manager. They organise staff resources to ensure that, even if there are unforeseen absences due to sickness, there is sufficient cover to meet the needs of residential pupils and keep them safe. The head of care also works directly with the children, providing visible leadership to staff. Staff are completely aware of their roles and responsibilities and display a total commitment to the welfare of children, needing little direction in their day-to-day work. The staff group is very stable, giving residential pupils the security of predictability and structure. This is evident to the children, one of whom said, 'I like the routines in residential.'

Staff are well supported through a comprehensive training programme which adapts to changing needs and so keeps their skills updated. Additionally, staff receive annual appraisal and good quality supervision on a regular basis. Some part time staff have been recently appointed and are completing induction programmes and embarking on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). However, they do not have the benefit of support from specialist assessors.

External monitoring of the residential provision is excellent. The independent visitor spends time with children to gauge the quality of their experiences within residence. Internal monitoring enables the headteacher and senior residential staff to understand how well the service meets the needs of residential pupils. Managers and staff are very creative and energetic in sourcing funding at a time of financial stringency. A number of bids for grant aid have been successful in improving the quality of the physical environment as well as enhancing children's experiences.

The ages and abilities of residential pupils vary widely. Nevertheless, staff have a thorough knowledge of each child and the barriers that each may have to achieving their potential. Support plans take account of the differences between children and staff implement these effectively to maximise children's progress. This approach echoes the overall culture of the school to challenge discrimination and unfair treatment. Linked with this principle is the residential staff's

commitment to working in partnership with parents. There is frequent contact between staff and parents, both informally and via formal meetings chaired by other professionals working with the family. Staff are also proactive in ensuring that, while in residence, children can stay in touch with their families and carers.

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

Unique reference number	114341
Social care unique reference number	SC040510
DfE registration number	840/7014

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.

Type of school	Maintained residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr P Wallbanks
Date of previous boarding inspection	11/07/2013
Telephone number	01325 300194
Email address	walworth@durhamlearning.net

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