

Wishmore Cross Academy

Alpha Road, Chobham, Woking, Surrey GU24 8NE

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Requires improvement
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the residential provision	Requires improvement
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour is not always managed effectively. Their inappropriate language is not tackled consistently by staff.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff are supported with managing pupils' behaviour and mental health needs.
- Pupils do not all make the progress of which they are capable because risk assessments and planning for pupils' progress are not helpful or systematic enough.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good. The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in some subject areas, and give up trying too easily.
- Leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of pupil premium funding.
- The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

The school has the following strengths

- The new principal has made a positive impact on the direction of the school.
- Leaders are experts in children's mental health and know the pupils extremely well.
- Safeguarding is effective. Bullying and physical conflict are rare in the school and the residential provision.
- Staff work closely as a team and pride themselves on never giving up on a pupil. As a result, pupils' attachments become stronger and their behaviour improves over time.
- Residential pupils enjoy the boarding experience, and especially the range of activities.

Compliance with national minimum standards for residential special schools

- The school must take action to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish a consistent approach to challenging pupils' inappropriate language in the school and the residential provision.
- Improve pupils' progress in the school and the residential provision, by:
 - ensuring that all plans and risk assessments include important information, are shared with relevant staff and are used effectively to support pupils' emotional needs.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, so that they are consistently good, by ensuring that:
 - new and less experienced teachers develop their skills in managing the behaviour of pupils who have mental health difficulties
 - all teaching staff plan effective sequences of lessons that will bring about good progress
 - the most able pupils are given more challenging work in order for them to achieve their potential.
- Implement the governors' pupil premium plan as soon as possible.
- Improve the residential accommodation so that it is more welcoming, homely and nurturing.
- Review access to the school site, including the entrance gate, in order to ensure more security for the residential provision.
- Commission an independent review of the arrangements for the administration of medication.

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools

- Children's physical, emotional and social development needs are promoted. (NMS 3.1)
- 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. (NMS 6.3)

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision

Requires improvement

How well children and young people are helped and protected in the residential provision

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not established high enough expectations of pupils' day-to-day conduct and language in the school or in the residential provision. Some staff do not challenge pupils' bad language effectively and a few staff feel that there is not enough support from senior leaders.
- School and residential leaders have assumed that communication between leaders and staff is better than it really is. There is a wealth of information about pupils held in the residential and school settings. However, this information is not shared widely enough or used systematically to help all pupils to progress as well as they could. For example, leaders have not made sure that strategies, such as the use of scripted conversations to help pupils to communicate, are available for staff in the residential provision.
- Since the last inspection, there has not been enough close attention to detail when updating risk assessments for day or residential pupils. Important information has not been recorded precisely enough. Some risk assessments for residential pupils are not personalised for the school or for individual pupils. Other risks, including those related to pupils' allergies, the use of electrical equipment and specific aspects of fire safety, have not been formalised in a written risk assessment.
- The arrangements for the administration of medication are too complex, and leaders do not have plans to independently review procedures. Although there have been very few errors, there is the potential for mistakes that could put pupils' health at risk.
- Leaders are aware that there are potential risks to site security for the residential provision. The main gates cannot be locked shut and the door to the residential accommodation needs repairing. Pupils are well supervised on the school and residential sites, and there are plans for remedial works in the future. Nevertheless, inspectors judged that leaders have underestimated the level of risk while they wait to make improvements.
- School leaders have not carried out a sufficiently precise analysis of how the pupil premium is being spent on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Plans for spending this funding and its impact on pupils' progress are too vague.
- The school is currently in a transition period with the appointment of the new principal. At the time of the inspection, he had been in post for three weeks. Staff welcome the change in direction and more supportive ethos, but some systems and procedures are not as precise as they should be.
- School leaders possess a wealth of knowledge about mental health difficulties and know the pupils in the school very well. Leaders' work with parents and other agencies is productive and supportive.

- The school's commitment to reducing restrictive physical intervention and restraint is commendable and helps to create an ethos where physical aggression is rare. The school's use of restorative justice is successfully helping pupils to develop self-control, a sense of empathy and understanding of right and wrong. As a result, over their time in the school, pupils develop more tolerant and inclusive values.
- Leaders and staff make sure that there are opportunities for pupils to participate in outdoor pursuits, charitable work and regular celebrations during the school year. In this way, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- The school's curriculum is suitable. There is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics in the primary and secondary phases. Leaders have made sure that the science curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. Pupils also benefit from studying food technology, computer science and art. In the primary phase, pupils enjoy interesting topics covering history and geography to extend their knowledge and fill gaps in their education history. In this way, the school's curriculum enables pupils to feel on a par with their peers in mainstream schools.
- Leaders have also established some helpful commercial programmes as part of the literacy curriculum. These programmes help pupils with their inference skills and with structuring longer pieces of writing.
- The alternative provision programmes are well designed and monitored carefully to ensure that pupils attend well and make progress.
- Leaders are committed to developing staff. They are aware that the school is a demanding and challenging place in which to work. Staff benefit from regular supervision sessions to help them manage their own workloads and stress. Leaders have also introduced a sensible programme of quality assurance and training for teaching and non-teaching staff. Recruitment to the school is difficult, so leaders are wisely developing existing staff.
- Communication, both with parents and outside agencies that work with pupils, is strong and purposeful. Leaders and staff work directly with parents and provide support and guidance.
- The school has made sure that urgent improvements to the residential accommodation have been made, such as installing anti-climb guttering to prevent unauthorised access to the roofs.

Governance of the school

- It is early days for the relatively new governing board. Nevertheless, governors demonstrate that they know the school well, have expertise in working with similar schools and can challenge school leaders. Their plans to monitor the school's performance are sensible and thorough.
- Governors have put together a tried and tested plan to ensure that the pupil premium funding can be used effectively and its impact on pupils analysed thoroughly.
- Governors have experience of leading effective safeguarding arrangements and know what to look for when checking the school's procedures and practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks on staff appointed to work in the school meet all requirements and follow recommended safer recruitment procedures.
- The school's designated safeguarding leaders make sure that their training is up to date and that all school and residential staff are trained in line with the latest guidance from the Secretary of State.
- Leaders are conscious that they have to deal with a high number of child protection concerns. In response, leaders have introduced a more up-to-date and efficient system for recording and storing information about pupils who may be at risk or pose concerns.
- Staff regard safeguarding as the top priority in the school and know exactly what to do and who to inform if they are worried about a pupil. They are confident that they will spot signs of harm or neglect. They maintain high standards of care and vigilance for all pupils, including those who continue to have input from children's services.
- Leaders work effectively with other agencies in the local authority. They make sure that they press for more support for pupils and families if they think that the right help is not being provided urgently enough.
- Staff are aware of their responsibilities in supporting child protection plans. However, inspectors found that residential staff were not fully implementing some aspects of pupils' plans, such as ensuring a healthy diet and keeping food diaries.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high. Some lessons do not get off to a good start because pupils take too long to settle down. Some pupils are not challenged enough to work harder, and are allowed to give up too easily or quickly.
- Information about pupils' needs, progress and ability is not used systematically to aid teachers' planning. Less experienced staff are not being supported sufficiently with meeting the school's expectations. As a result, some pupils, particularly those who are most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Sometimes pupils' anxieties and heightened emotions disrupt lessons and are not managed smoothly. The school's protocols for pupils leaving lessons and the managing of 'time out' are not consistently applied.
- In some lessons, pupils casually swear and use bad language both among their peers and in the presence of staff. These poor habits do not help pupils to take their studies seriously and be responsible for their own academic progress.
- In some subjects, pupils' learning and progression are not well planned to make the most of the facilities and pupils' interests.
- In their attempts to foster a positive and encouraging atmosphere, teaching staff

praise pupils frequently. Sometimes, such routine praise is not really deserved, and pupils do not value it.

- School leaders have introduced a sensible, step-by-step approach in order to help pupils to progress through lessons and maintain their motivation. When this works effectively, pupils are more challenged and achieve more. They feel rewarded by learning for its intrinsic value and take their work more seriously. However, this approach is not used consistently throughout the school.
- Teachers are adaptable, with many having to teach a range of subjects in addition to their specialisms. They quickly acquire strong subject knowledge and confidence.
- Teachers usually question pupils well. When pupils are involved and concentrating, teaching staff make the most of extending their learning and knowledge through posing more probing questions.
- Some teachers do all they can to interest pupils in their subjects through innovative methods, but without using gimmicks or losing sight of what needs to be learned. They also make sure that pupils have frequent opportunities to practise what they have learned, recall content and try out exercises in different contexts.
- Staff create attractive and accessible resources to support and give structure to pupils' learning. With these materials, pupils gain confidence and pride in their work.
- Through a range of intervention programmes for reading, writing and mathematics, by the end of Year 11, pupils have been helped to catch up and make progress.
- Pupils on alternative provision programmes increase their motivation to learn because of appropriate and effective teaching, which leads to better attendance, behaviour and outcomes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils typically arrive in the school with complex difficulties and anxieties, which often lead to challenging behaviour. Some pupils have experienced disrupted schooling, exclusions and trauma. However, pupils' difficulties are not always communicated clearly and systematically to all staff.
- Some pupils have difficulties in communicating, but not all staff understand and use the right strategies to help them. This leads to some pupils becoming frustrated and overwhelmed by their emotions. Leaders have rightly identified that they have not done enough to help these pupils with managing their own moods and impulses.
- However, many pupils enjoy and appreciate, often for the first time in their lives, what a school offers to them. In addition, most older pupils have formed strong bonds with staff and with each other by the time they reach Year 11. They grow to understand the importance of their education. Over time, pupils settle into the school, learning to be considerate and to make the right choices.

- Pupils learn about keeping themselves safe, including the potential risks when using social media and the internet.
- Pupils attending alternative provision usually behave appropriately, learn more self-control and increase their confidence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' inappropriate language, frustration and anxiety are not being tackled consistently well. Staff have not been supported sufficiently well to reduce pupils' poor language habits.
- However, for older pupils, over time, their behaviour and attitudes improve because staff and leaders stand by them and do not give up on helping them. They grow to trust staff, gain more self-discipline and enjoy learning more. Older pupils are less likely to use inappropriate language, and are more polite and considerate to each other and staff.
- The school's resolute commitment to reducing physical intervention has made the school a physically safe environment. Incidents of violence decline over time for individual pupils as a result of the school's principled approach. Leaders can demonstrate clearly that, in nearly all cases, pupils feel safe with each other and staff, despite outbursts and poor language.
- Although exclusion rates are high, compared with national figures, they are declining as the school's approach to restorative justice becomes more established.
- Attendance improves while pupils are in school, including for those pupils who attend alternative provision. Most pupils' attendance is close to national figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Some pupils do not make the progress they should because teaching is not consistently good enough.
- Some pupils' behaviour has proved to be hard to manage, and has had an adverse impact on their attainment and progress.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. In some cases, the staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve and manage on their own are not high enough. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection, when the school was judged to be good, but it has not yet been resolved. Those pupils who are disadvantaged make the same progress as their peers.
- Older pupils make good progress in mathematics and are challenged to do even better. Similarly, some older pupils' English books demonstrate clearly that they can produce sustained writing, making helpful use of structures and planning.
- Pupils enjoy learning in science. They make the most of opportunities to think scientifically. They are willing to practise their skills, recalling key facts and content.

- Pupils' art work shows promise and more sustained concentration than seen in some other areas. Pupils' well-kept sketchbooks and folders demonstrate that they could be challenged to achieve even more.
- Pupils' books and folders in all subjects are neat and tidy, showing pride in their presentation. It is evident that, when in the right frame of mind, pupils are keen to work hard and do their best.
- Over time, pupils' examination results at the end of Year 11 have improved, including at GCSE in English and mathematics. Nearly all pupils go on to take up places in employment, further education or training.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision

Requires improvement

- Residential staff do not consistently challenge pupils' bad language in the boarding provision, and when out and about in the community. Casual swearing and inappropriate language have become part of the culture of the residential provision, and are having a detrimental effect on some pupils' emotional well-being. Pupils are therefore not being supported with preparation for life beyond school and residential care.
- The residential provision is not sufficiently comfortable or nurturing. Pupils stay in accommodation that is rather austere and not personalised. For example, there are no wardrobe doors. For some pupils, the accommodation is a constant reminder that they are in care.
- In spite of the impersonal environment, pupils very much enjoy the boarding experience and look forward to staying over. They especially appreciate the wide range of activities. Staff support them in the activities of their choice, such as judo or swimming, while encouraging them to challenge themselves in unfamiliar activities.
- Pupils have access to an independent visitor who comes in regularly to assess the quality of care, providing a helpful report to senior leaders.
- Staff in the residential provision treat pupils with dignity and respect. They are responsive to their wishes and needs. Staff ensure that there is no deliberate bullying or physical harassment. No pupil has felt the need to complain about any aspect of boarding since the last welfare inspection.
- Residential staff do not use physical restraint as a regular means of control or to manage challenging behaviour. Staff are well trained in using more appropriate means of managing pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	138766
Social care unique reference number	SC013899
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10053315

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	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Number of boarders on roll	14
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Malcolm Reeve
Principal	Richard Johnson
Telephone number	01276 857 555
Website	www.wishmorecrossacademy.org
Email address	contact@wishmorecrossacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2014

Information about this school

- Wishmore Cross Academy caters for up to 70 boys aged from nine to 16, who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). A board of trustees is responsible for governance. A local governing board is in place, comprising a chair of governors, appointed but not employed by AET, peer principals from other AET academies and the specialist director of special educational needs and/or disabilities for

the whole trust.

- The school offers up to 14 residential places to pupils on a flexible programme.
- The current principal took up his post in September 2018.
- Pupils are placed in the school by a number of different local authorities. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The school uses the following alternative providers: Pitstop Vocational Centre, Skillways Vocational Centre, Gasp Motor Vehicle Project, Guildford Bike Project and Change of Scene.

Information about this inspection

- This was an integrated inspection of the education and residential provision.
- Inspectors met with school leaders and members of the governing board.
- An inspector spent time in the residential provision during the evening to observe activities, including a trip to go swimming.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff, middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors visited a number of lessons, mostly accompanied by senior leaders. A sample of pupils' work was evaluated, along with information about their progress and attainment.
- Inspectors attended assembly and observed break and lunchtime.
- The school's information about pupils' behaviour, attendance and safety was reviewed.
- An inspector checked whether the residential provision meets the national minimum standards.
- There were no responses to Parent View. Inspectors considered the school's own surveys of parents.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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