

Welburn Hall School

Welburn Hall School, Welburn, Kirkbymoorside, York YO62 7HQ

Inspection dates

30/01/2017–01/02/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement **3**

The quality of care and support

Good 2

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision requires improvement because

- The impact of leadership and management is not consistently good enough. Progress with improvements is slow. Senior leaders recognise the strengths and weaknesses and are committed to a process of continuous improvement. However, the senior leadership team is not yet an effective force for change. New systems and initiatives require embedding in practice to be able to assess their impact.
- There are aspects of safeguarding practice in relation to risk management, reporting of concerns and management oversight that are not yet good.
- Residential pupils enjoy their time here and make good progress. Their behaviour is good and they feel safe. Parents report that the residential provision helps pupils with their progress and development.
- The staff team members are enthusiastic and caring. They work hard to provide a good standard of care and are keen to see all pupils succeed in life. They feel well supported by their managers and there are good systems of staff supervision and training.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 5.1 Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Where children are aged eight years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls.

- 6.2 The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured.
- 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.
- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12.1 The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Complete and review written risk assessments of the arrangements for sleeping accommodation. Use this process to demonstrate that risks reduce.
- Complete and review written risk assessments of the residential buildings. Use this process to demonstrate that risks reduce.
- Effectively implement a written risk assessment policy to help safeguard the welfare of pupils.
- Ensure that the child protection policy has regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Reinforce practice so that all staff, including members of the senior leadership team, fulfil their responsibility to report concerns about the conduct of other staff.
- Establish a system for the effective oversight of the safeguarding database.
- Maintain an accurate log of complaints and concerns.
- Ensure that the behaviour management policy complies with relevant legislation, has regard to relevant guidance and is understood by staff and children. Establish a system for effective review of behaviour management across the whole school.
- Develop the senior leadership team into a cohesive group and an effective force for evaluation, review and continuous improvement.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted gave the school two and a half hours' notice of the inspection. The inspector spoke to a range of residential pupils, boys and girls, across different year groups, individually and in small groups, including sixth form pupils. Time was spent observing routines at tea time and evening activities and how residential pupils and staff interact. The inspector met with a range of staff including the headteacher, head of care, chair of the governors and residential staff. Parents' views were collated from the Ofsted 'Parent View' website and from direct contact during the inspection. The inspector consulted with representatives from the local authority's special educational needs department and safeguarding team and examined a range of records, policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding and care of residential pupils.

Inspection team

Simon Morley

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Welburn Hall School is a maintained residential special school for up to 75 boys and girls aged eight to 19 years who have special educational needs. At the time of inspection, there were 74 students on roll and 41 spent some time boarding. The vast majority of sixth form students board Monday to Thursday. Younger pupils board on a more flexible basis.

Pupils may have learning disabilities, autism, physical disabilities, sensory impairment and/or medical conditions. Residential accommodation is mostly provided in the main house and is split between sixth form students and a 'family group' for younger pupils. There is a separate detached bungalow, converted into two single-bedroomed flats, for students to practice independent living. The school is situated in grounds of 20 acres near the village of Welburn in North Yorkshire. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

Leaders and managers agree with the areas for improvement identified during this inspection. They were already in the process of taking action in some areas. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the residential provision and are committed to meeting all the national minimum standards and making further improvements. Existing management arrangements ensure that residential pupils make good progress and enjoy positive experiences. The potential for an impact on residential pupils without the necessary changes to safeguarding practice and management means that currently the school requires improvement.

The staff have a good knowledge of the diverse needs of residential pupils. They put this understanding to good use so that pupils receive effective support that helps them to progress with their personal, social and emotional development. The majority of pupils make good or better progress in school and there is additional targeted support for the small numbers of pupils who make less progress. Sixth form students achieve a range of functional skills and entry level and vocational qualifications. They improve their independence skills and they all continue with their education and training when they leave school. Some pupils go on to live successfully in supported living accommodation.

Residential pupils make friends with their peers and form strong relationships with staff. They enjoy staying at the school and take part in a wide range of activities. The individually tailored approach to their care helps to meet their needs for the future. Consequently, their outcomes for adulthood improve as they develop their knowledge, social and communication skills and independence. School leaders are setting up new systems to assess and track progress in relation to pupils' personal, social and emotional development. This aims to promote their progress and development further.

Staff actively seek residential pupils' views about day-to-day life in the school through regular forums. Pupils' comments are positive and they think well of the school. However, parents are not consistently unanimous in their views. For example, figures from those that responded to an Ofsted online survey indicate that 31% think the school is not managed well and that pupils do not receive appropriate homework. 38% think that they do not receive valuable information about their child's progress. One parent spoken to directly raised issues about the quality of leadership in the school. However, 100% consider that the residential provision helps their child's progress and development. School leaders have sought parents' views to review and develop the vision and values of the school. The headteacher is planning further consultation with parents about the quality of the school provision and will use these results to inform any future improvements.

The quality of care and support

Good

Residential pupils benefit from the support provided by caring, nurturing and experienced staff. Staff are patient and understanding and take the time to understand residential pupils' individual needs. This is reflected in parents' comments, such as 'she

can be quite challenging but the support is really quite remarkable' and 'he is very complex, it is a brilliant school and he loves it'.

The quality of care helps residential pupils to achieve personal targets, such as, self-care, exercise, communication, social skills and independence. Sixth form pupils in particular benefit from developing their independence. This includes road safety, using public transport, budgeting, cooking, interview skills and promoting their employability. They are able to practice independent living in two self-contained flats with minimal support from staff. This gives them good opportunities for taking complete responsibility for daily routines and day-to-day decision making. One parent commented, 'He has come on immensely with his life skills and enjoys the independent living.' Another parent said, 'They are really good at promoting independence.'

Staff make the boarding experience fun and enjoyable. Residential pupils are active and benefit from an extensive choice of activities. They enjoy ball games, exercise in the hall, biking, swimming, dancing, going to the cinema and take part in Rock Challenge. There are jigsaws, arts and craft activities, hama beads, pool tables, table football and games consoles to play on. Pupils' engagement is high and helps to promote their social skills, confidence, physical health and well-being.

School leaders oversee robust healthcare arrangements and ensure that health and care plans contain relevant information so that they meet pupils' health and welfare needs. These cover specific and complex needs in relation to disability, diet, epilepsy and emotional well-being. Parents commented positively about how effective and understanding staff have been in promoting continence and providing support with epilepsy. The well-developed arrangements for administering medication further safeguard residential pupils' health.

Staff empower residential pupils to be involved in decisions about their care as much as possible. Signs, symbols and social stories support pupils with communication difficulties. Weekly forums give pupils a strong voice in what happens. Staff plan to develop these further and include discussion topics relevant to pupils' learning, such as, internet safety.

The head of care maintains a good oversight of the care planning, support and targets for residential pupils. There is a strong focus on individual needs, such as social skills, emotional well-being, self-care and independence. He ensures that the care of residential pupils is regularly reviewed so that plans and targets reflect their progress. A new assessment framework will assist in this process.

Residential pupils enjoy a good standard of accommodation. There are plenty of activity areas and pupils enjoy using the school hall for exercise sessions. There are appropriate aids and adaptations in place for pupils with physical disabilities. Staff make effective use of the space. For example, they recently swapped around different age groups of pupils to provide the larger number of older pupils with more room. Pupils can contact their families while boarding and parents can telephone the school as well to talk to their children.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

The school generally keeps children safe within the residential provision but there are aspects of safeguarding practice that need to improve. The reporting of concerns about pupils' welfare is not consistently robust across staff in the whole school. Gaps in communication between senior leaders led to a short delay in addressing a recent issue about staff practice. At the time of inspection, the headteacher was tackling these weaknesses.

The head of care has developed a new database of any safeguarding issues. He is the designated safeguarding lead and is supported by four other members of the senior leadership team. The database allows for tracking of safeguarding concerns about residential pupils, including referrals to the local authority's children's services. All five of the school's safeguarding leaders can manage 'cases' and they meet regularly to share information. However management oversight is not effective enough to ensure that records are up to date and that appropriate action is taken in every case.

The governing body has yet to agree to the school's written risk assessment policy. This was due to take place at the end of the inspection. Risk assessments were not in place both in relation to the residential accommodation buildings and for decisions about safely managing residential sleeping arrangements. Staff do give careful consideration about splitting residential pupils by gender and age ranges and determining who shares bedrooms. However, the lack of formal risk assessments compromises how well risks are reduced and leaders cannot demonstrate how residential pupils become safer.

Staff have good information about individual risks to pupils, for example in relation to diet, mobility, attention difficulties and aggression. Care practice takes account of these risks so that pupils benefit from the support that they receive and consequently overcome barriers to personal progress.

Staff are good at supporting residential pupils with any challenging behaviour. Staff use their knowledge of pupils' needs effectively to ensure that their residential experiences are positive. Staff practice is sensitive, consistent and in line with residential pupils' individual behaviour management plans. These plans are comprehensive and regularly reviewed. Staff take appropriate action to keep residential pupils safe in their day-to-day lives at school. There are no incidents when pupils are missing and staff know the appropriate action to take if necessary.

Residential pupils say that they feel safe and that staff address any incidents of bullying. Incidents that require staff to physically intervene or impose a sanction are very rare, which is testament to pupils' good behaviour. The head of care thoroughly monitors any incidents in the residential provision and ensures that staff practice is of a high standard. A separate recording system is in use in the school's education provision that is not routinely scrutinised by the head of care. It would be more beneficial for reviewing and evaluating behaviour management practice if all records and incidents are overseen by one senior leader.

Residential pupils know how to complain and their views and those of their parents are listened to when they do. Leaders take appropriate action in response to complaints, which the governors oversee. The school would benefit from keeping an up-to-date log of concerns and complaints as part of their monitoring. Not all parents agreed that the

school is effective in tackling bullying. Keeping a log of concerns would help to identify any patterns or trends and contribute towards good practice.

There is a good recruitment process for new staff, ensuring that only people who are suitable to work with children are appointed. There are regular checks of fire safety equipment and procedures to help keep pupils safe. Senior leaders are planning to make the grounds safer and reduce identified risks, for example, from the school pond.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

The school has appointed a new headteacher since the last inspection. She is keen to raise standards across the whole school for the benefit of all pupils. The head of care has been given more support to develop his leadership role and improve the quality of the review, evaluation and leadership of the residential provision. Despite this, the pace of change and progress is slow.

The school has still not met one of the two standards that were not met at the last inspection. The behaviour management policy still does not have regard to relevant guidance. At the time of this inspection, all policies were under review to ensure that they are all robust. A further area for development that was to support pupils to make more spontaneous choices about off-site activities still requires completion.

The other unmet standard is now met and all the required policies are in place. In addition, there is a new system for reviewing and evaluating how well the school meets the national minimum standards. The head of care has used this to identify areas for further development and he has started to plan these improvements. Another improvement is the new system for tracking residential pupils' personal, social and emotional progress. At the time of inspection, this included baseline information but needs further time to embed and assess its impact.

The quality of monitoring and report writing undertaken by a new independent visitor is better. The headteacher, head of care and governors scrutinise subsequent written reports following half-termly visits as part of their commitment to continuous improvement. The head of care also receives extra external supervision from an independent consultant to help improve the strength of his management.

The senior leadership team does not work cohesively, which compromises its ability to drive change and manage the school well. The governors and local authority acknowledge this. While supportive and challenging of the school, the governing body has undergone significant recent changes and requires consolidation to provide consistent and robust governance. The local authority is working closely with the headteacher to strengthen the impact of the leadership arrangements.

The well-established residential care team provides stability and consistency for the residential pupils. Staff have achieved or are working towards the recommended level 3 qualification and undertake a range of training. Consequently, they are equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge to ensure that residential pupils receive good standards of care. Residential staff feel supported and valued. This helps them to work effectively as a team.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

| Judgement | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Outstanding | A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced. |
| Good | A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted. |
| Requires improvement | A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good. |
| Inadequate | A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress. |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 121766 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC007943 |
| DfE registration number | 815/7004 |

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.

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| Type of school | Residential special school |
| Number of boarders on roll | 41 |
| Gender of boarders | Mixed |
| Age range of boarders | 8 to 19 |
| Headteacher | Marianne Best |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 08/12/2015 |
| Telephone number | 01751 431218 |
| Email address | admin@welburn-hall.n-yorks.sch.uk |

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