

Welburn Hall School

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

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a local authority maintained residential special school for boys and girls, aged eight to 19 years, who have special educational needs. All students have an education, health and care plan. There are 78 students on roll. Of these, 24 students board from Monday to Thursday. All boarding students are in the sixth form.

Students may have learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, physical disabilities, sensory impairment and/or other medical conditions. Most of the residential provision is in the main house. There is a detached bungalow, which has been converted into two single-bedroom flats for students to practise independent living. The school is set in grounds of 20 acres near the village of Welburn in North Yorkshire.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 7 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 11 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Students enjoy good relationships with staff, who know them well. Staff understand students' needs, likes and dislikes. Students speak warmly of staff, including their key workers. The quality and depth of these relationships mean that staff provide students with the individualised care they need.

Students learn consistently through a 24-hour curriculum. Communication between residential staff and school staff is good. This helps to identify and resolve any issues. Several staff, including at a senior level, work in both the school and residence. This helps to promote a whole-school ethos, resulting in a single approach to caring for and educating students. This consistency helps students to learn throughout the day, boosting their achievements.

Students learn a range of skills, which help them to become more independent. For example, they learn about food storage, cooking, cleaning and independent travel. Staff work with students on topics around healthy relationships, including the safe use of mobile phones. Students are working towards accredited awards. Family members comment on the progress their children make. This work helps to prepare students for the next stage of their lives.

Students are supported to be healthy. Physical activities help students to improve their fitness and emotional well-being. These include trampolining, basketball, circuit training, walking and cycling. These activities have continued during the pandemic. The school nurse undertakes targeted work with some students, such as specialist diets or feminine hygiene work. Such work helps students to learn the importance of healthy routines to keep themselves fit and well.

Students' emotional health is promoted throughout the school. Well-being support is provided through one-to-one sessions, as well as in the weekly student forum. Students also join in events such as mental health awareness week and the '100 Miles in May' challenge. This means that students not only benefit on an individual level, they are also part of the wider group doing something positive for others. This is very good for their sense of self-worth.

Students are regularly consulted so that staff understand their views. Staff use specialist equipment to understand the wishes and feelings of those with more complex communication needs. This inclusive approach means that all students feel valued and are confident to take part in decision-making.

Some students are dissatisfied with the choice and quality of food. Although meals include a vegetarian option and an alternative for those on gluten-free diets, the variety is limited. The school nurse notes that meals could be more nutritious. Senior managers are aware of this concern and work is ongoing to improve meals.

Parents are pleased with the quality of care their children receive. One parent said: 'Staff are brilliant. My boy has never before experienced such a positive placement. The whole child is nurtured and listened to and individuality is recognised.' Another said that her whole family benefited from her son staying in the residence. All parents confirm that communication from the school is very good. Family members place considerable value on their children staying in the residential provision.

The living accommodation for students is being refurbished. Some bedrooms are of a good standard. Other bedrooms still require updating, although none present a risk to students. The refurbishment plan is clearly set out, with the next phase to be completed this summer. The progress that had been made since the last full inspection in February 2020 has been sustained.

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

Staff understand students' risks and take action to keep them safe. For example, on the one occasion that a student was missing, staff response was swift, and the student was found quickly. Staff undertake individualised work with students, to find safe solutions to their worries. The good relationships between staff and students mean that this approach is successful. Students' risks reduce as a result.

Staff manage behaviour effectively. They are trained in behaviour management techniques that emphasise preventative strategies. Staff are very calm in their approach to students, as seen several times during the inspection. Some students help to find solutions to their difficulties. This gives them greater ownership of their behaviour. The effectiveness of this approach means that the behaviour of students is overwhelmingly positive.

There has been a small number of physical interventions since the last inspection. No concerns are associated with these incidents, which have not required the use of force. Recording is detailed and includes the views of the student and staff concerned. The use of physical intervention helps to keep students or others safe, when no other option is available.

Staff undertake safeguarding training, individually and as a team. They know what to do in a serious incident and are confident about whistle-blowing processes. Safeguarding issues are regularly discussed in supervision and team meetings. Communication between staff and statutory agencies is good. This means that students receive the help and protection they need, when they need it. The approach to safeguarding means that students are cared for by staff who have the knowledge and skills to keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The residential and safeguarding manager has the role of head of care. He has been in post since March 2020. He is dedicated to improving the service and is ambitious for the students to achieve their potential. He has made and sustained positive

changes to students' experiences and the progress they make. This is confirmed by many members of staff and parents. One parent said: 'The residential provision has improved now that it has an effective manager.'

The changes that the residential and safeguarding manager made after he arrived at the school have been sustained and built upon. He leads by example, with clear expectations of the staff team. For example, staff have improved their understanding and recording of students' progress. This means that students receive a coordinated approach from staff. Some staff are developing their own initiative to develop further changes. Early indications are that this is leading to an improvement in students' progress.

Staff receive regular supervision and appraisal of their practice. This focuses on the impact their care has on students. Any performance issues are managed well. Staff feel very supported by the residential and safeguarding manager, who makes himself available to the team. Staff feel energised by the new leadership arrangements, resulting in them providing responsive and effective care for students.

Staff talk to students about understanding each other's needs. Tolerance of each other is emphasised, as seen during the inspection. One parent was impressed by the sensitivity their child showed for another student. This acceptance of each other adds to the ethos of the school being a welcoming, inclusive environment for all.

The school is ably supported by the governing body. Although visits to the school have been affected by the COVID-19 restrictions, governors continue to hold leaders to account. For example, governors have recently challenged senior leaders about the quality of food. The independent visitor also knows the school very well, and prepares useful reports following his visits. School leaders respond positively to recommendations from these external checks. As a result, gaps in provision are quickly identified and met.

The residential and safeguarding manager has improved the quality of monitoring and oversight of the residential provision. For example, the bedrooms are much tidier, with far less clutter than seen at the last full inspection. Some minor issues relating to the decor of some bedrooms have not been repaired in good time. Leaders accept that their monitoring of the service has fallen short in this respect. Changes have been made to the way bedroom checks are carried out.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Children to be provided with tasty meals that are nutritious and have variety. A range of alternatives to be provided for those children who have restricted diets. (NMS 8.1)
- Senior staff to ensure that monitoring arrangements are thorough, so that required repairs in the children's bedrooms are known and undertaken quickly. (NMS 13.4)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC007943

Headteacher: Marianne Best

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Inspectors

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