

Cloughwood Academy

Stones Manor Lane, Hartford, NORTHWICH, Cheshire, CW8 1NU

Inspection dates 14 September to 17 September 2015

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **Good**

Quality of care and support Good

How well children and young people are protected Good

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Good

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good

- Young people are safe and say they feel safe here. They said they choose to stay in residence and engage in a variety of extended day activities, such as swimming and sailing.

Young people enjoy spending time with their friends. They have strong trusting relationships with staff, which enable them to talk openly to them about any issues that are concerning them. Young people said they feel valued because staff listen to them.

Young people's attendance and attainment at school is improving, because of their overnight stays and extended day activities. A young person said they had improved their English by two levels. He said staff are helping him to look for a work experience placement so he can explore his chosen career path to see if it is right for him.

Strong leadership and governance means staff are well supported. Monitoring of the school lacks rigour. This is because it has not identified the slippage in the detail and clarity of record keeping or a decline in the décor and maintenance of the building.

Staff and senior leaders are highly committed to addressing these issues. An action plan was initiated prior to the completion of the inspection with clear expected outcomes and dates for review. It is this dynamic leadership which enables the school to move forward.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the monitoring by the independent visitor and school clearly identifies any shortfalls, the action to be taken and dates for completion.
- Ensure information in young people's files is current, accessible and is sufficiently detailed, in particular records of physical interventions, sanctions, incident reports, care plans, key worker sessions and medication records.
- Ensure sufficient information is sourced prior to young people attending residence or extended day with particular regard to known risks and behaviours.
- Ensure the premises are well maintained and provide a homely environment for young people, in particular ensure identified risks are minimised.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was formally announced on day one in a telephone call to the school. A full tour of the residential premises was undertaken and a range of records were examined. A number of senior staff including the Principle and head of care were spoken to throughout the inspection and informed of the emerging findings. The inspector spent time talking to care staff and the young people. Evening activities were observed over two nights. Feedback was provided on the final day to the Principle and head of care.

Inspection team

Chris Scully

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Cloughwood Academy is a purpose-built day and residential special school academy. It is located within extensive grounds on the Mid Cheshire Campus in Hartford. It is run by a board of directors. The academy caters for male pupils between the ages of 8 and 18 years. There are currently 51 pupils on roll. The academy provides extended day and residential places for up to 32 pupils on weekdays in term time, with a maximum of 17 staying per night. Young people are cared for in four separate living units. There is a large range of boarding options available, depending upon the individual needs of the child. The school was last inspected over two visits that took place in September and November 2014.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The school is led and managed by the Principal, who is committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for all young people regardless of their starting point. He leads from the front and is supported by a strong leadership team which includes the head of care. Young people's attainment and attendance at school has improved, and there are a wealth of opportunities available to them which significantly increases their confidence and self-esteem.

They are actively encouraged to arrive on time for the school day. They are keen to attend and staff collect them if they have missed their transport. One young person used his initiative when he missed his transport and ordered a taxi to get himself to school. This resulted in a large bill but demonstrates the commitment of the young person to come to school.

The monitoring of the care provision is no longer robust. It does not accurately reflect the findings, such as the lack of homeliness of the residential provision or the damage in some bedrooms. Immediate action was taken during the inspection to address this.

Young people are consulted on all aspects of the extended day and their residential experience. For example, the type of activities they want to undertake and planning the evening menus. Discussions with the boys ensure their voices are 'heard' and acted upon. One young person said he would like to go sailing and was disappointed he was not able to at this time. However, he was pleased that staff explained the reasons why and that he could go once this recommenced later in the year.

The residential provision is well organised and is run for the benefit of the young people. A highly committed, stable staff team ensure their day to day needs are met well. A parent said the staff are 'responsive, caring individuals' who keep her well informed of her son's stay. Staff have regular opportunities to engage in a wide range of training events, for example, PREVENT training. This is enhancing their understanding of extremism and radicalisation.

The schools health care arrangements are sound. Staff are trained to administer medication and first aid which helps keep young people safe. However, some medication records do not clearly identify the dosage of the medication to be given. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the care offered to young people.

The school works in partnership with other health care providers such as child and adolescent mental health teams (CAMHS). A health care professional said 'staff go out of their way to make school health feel an integral part of their team'. Young people are taking more responsibility for their own health care needs, such as using their inhalers.

Encouraging young people's independence is a strength of the provision. Training for independent travel is well received by the boys and equips them with the skills to safely use public transport. This provides them with the freedom to see their friends at the weekend. Some young people are really keen to get started on this and push staff to hurry up the process. Staff effectively explain why they need to do this in stages to help keep them safe. Parents said their children are much more confident in their own abilities as a result of the thoughtfully planned input from the residential team.

Young people have a strong affiliation with the school. They are happy and settled here and frequently choose at the last minute to attend extended day activities. Young people's individual needs are known and understood by staff. However, this information is not always comprehensively recorded or up-to-date within the young people's individual records such as care plans and keyworker records. This leads to inconsistencies in the records. For example, valuable information about young people's behaviour is sometimes overlooked. As a result the behaviour of some young people new to the school such as swearing and using racist, homophobic or sexualised language is not consistently challenged and addressed.

Staff spend considerable amounts of time talking and interacting with young people. Young people said they can talk to the staff about anything. A young person explained that a member of staff had helped them to 'sort things out at home.' Another said that if 'I didn't want to come I wouldn't as nobody's making me.' They also know they can talk to advocates or call Childline.

Young people are making good progress across all areas of their social, emotional and personal development. Young people who have attended for longer periods of time are much more able to manage challenging or difficult situations. A young person said they were now able to ignore other young people's inappropriate behaviour and let the staff manage this rather than becoming involved himself. A parent said that their son's 'social maturity' has improved greatly, partly due to the activities, guidance and challenges he receives during his stay.

Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms, as it is so early in the new term some bedrooms lack any real ownership by the boys. Lounge areas on day one lacked any homeliness, immediate steps were taken to address this during the inspection. The boys commented on day two that it looked better and said they liked the new throws and cushions. A number of health and safety and cleanliness issues were also addressed during the inspection. The school has set aside funds to refurbish the residential environment and work is to commence on this in the near future.

Young people are actively encouraged to keep themselves fit and healthy. The cookery club encourages them to make a range of healthy nutritious meals and snacks. Young people confidently explain to visitors that they do not have additional salt or sugar on their food in school. They demonstrate an awareness of the potential dangers of having too much sugar in their diet and the possible detrimental side effect of obesity and tooth decay.

Young people said they have the opportunities to talk to their parents during their stay if they want to. They have access to a telephone and can use their own mobiles but hand these in to staff at night. The boys said this was so they did not play on them all night.

The boys enjoy an extensive range of fun activities of their choice. Their individual interests such as the army cadets or playing in their local football team are very well supported. Staff take and collect young people which means they are able to continue to be totally committed to their chosen activity and to mix and engage with their peers. They offer support and guidance to each other when playing and help younger children to understand rules. For example, they talk to other young people about the rules for bowling and how they can improve upon their technique. This includes 'shadow bowling' which enabled a young person to move on from using the stand to bowling independently. Young people celebrate each other's success with a 'round of high fives'

when someone scored a half or full strike.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people's safety is a priority. Staff have a secure understanding of the schools safeguarding arrangements and work with other agencies when needed to support young people. Positive relationships between teaching and care staff means everyone is made aware of any issues which may impact upon a young person's stay in residence.

Staff are very aware of the individual needs of young people and are confident to report any concerns to the designated safeguarding officers. Any child protection or safeguarding concerns are immediately shared with the Local Designated Officer (LADO) and their advice is acted upon by the school. This means they are able to keep young people safe.

Young people do not go missing from residence. They may absence themselves for short period of time within the grounds, but said they know that staff will be out looking for them. Young people said that sometimes they just need a bit of space, but that they are working with staff on this so that they can do this safely.

The use of physical interventions in the residence is minimal. Sanctions are generally appropriate. However, the recording in some records is not robust. For example, a sanction was recorded as to stay overnight at school. This was not the case, but led the reader to assume this was a consequence to the young person's behaviour. Two boys independently spoke about an incident on day one. They both explained how they thought some young people's behaviour was 'horrendous.' They were keen to point out that it was not normally like this and some young people had gotten carried away. They said they 'let themselves, the school and us down, it's not what we do.' This demonstrates good insight into what behaviours are expected and also shows a their pride and commitment to the school.

Staff make good use of de-briefs following incidents to consider what could have been done differently in order to minimise a reoccurrence. Records of some incidents are not always robustly recorded and some lack clarity and detail. This mean staff are not able to effectively analyse the situation and young people who may wish to see their records in the future do not get a true picture of their time here. Risk assessments are not always individualised to each young person. This is because the school does not always make best use of existing information to inform the risk assessment, for example, that a young person may run of and can be impulsive.

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The residential provision is managed well. It is an integral part of the school and the positive impact of helping to improve outcomes for the boys across all their areas of learning is highly valued. The principle and senior management team (SMT) are committed to addressing the shortfalls identified at this inspection. For example, additional training and support is planned for staff with regards to recording information, data sensitivity, reporting incidents, keyworker expectations and care planning.

Governors are very supportive and are working in partnership with the SMT to resolve the issues.

The chair of governors is not afraid to challenge the school and request additional information at governor's meetings to clarify points that arise. He said he has 'great faith' that the issues from the inspection will be quickly rectified. A parent governor echoed these comments stating, they are confident to challenge the principle and head of care across all issues for example, on how the school is supporting looked after young people. This resulted in changes to the policies and procedures to support these young people.

The care staff work well together as a team. They know and understand each other's strengths and area of expertise and effectively utilise these skills. For example, a member of staff takes the lead on the cookery club, others on sporting and independence training. Staff have regular professional supervision and team meetings which enables them to reflect upon their practice and consider new ways of working. Staff said they feel well supported by the head of care and SMT. They say they are listened to and their suggestions are well received, such as the improvement of the dorms décor.

Staff are highly committed to improving outcomes for young people. They work well with parents and keep them updated on their child's experiences at the home. They are particularly good at focussing on what has gone well rather than the negatives for the young person. A parent said, 'I personally have the highest regard for both teaching and residential staff for their amazing patience in dealing with such a variety of young boys, I cannot imagine where my young lad would be without this supportive school.'

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

Unique reference number	140093
Social care unique reference number	SC006625
DfE registration number	

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	Residential Special school
Number of boarders on roll	51
Gender of boarders	Male
Age range of boarders	8-18 years
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Larkin
Date of previous boarding inspection	November 2014
Telephone number	01606 288090
Email address	head@cloughwood.cheshire.sch.uk

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