

Cloughwood Special School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

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, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Cloughwood Residential School is a maintained purpose-built special school. located within extensive grounds on the Mid Cheshire Campus in Hartford. It is run by Cheshire County Council educational services.

The school only caters for boys. There are currently 50 pupils on roll aged from six to 16 plus years of age. The school currently is providing residential places for up to 24 young people during weekdays in term time with a maximum of 17 per night.

Young people are cared for in four separate living units. There are a variety of boarding arrangements available depending on the needs of the child. These range from one to four nights each week. The residential provision was last inspected on the 9th June 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. There are substantial strengths within the quality of the provision offered to residential pupils. Staff and parents work in partnership to make sure residential pupils are safe, lead healthy lifestyles, enjoy learning, achieve and are prepared for adult life. Staff view residential pupils very positively and are proud of their individual achievements. Residential pupils are seen as individuals with different needs, tastes and interests.
- The school continues to be an example of the best residential care. Highly effective systems mean equality and diversity are an intrinsic part of the school. Residential pupils have a strong voice in the school community.
- Residential pupils receive excellent care delivered by a skilled, passionate and committed group of staff who want the very best for them. Staff have an innate understanding of residential pupils needs which enables them to provide high quality care. Parents are also very proud of their children's achievements. They say, 'I couldn't of asked for a better school for my child, 10/10, excellent,' and 'they really look forward to staying at school and have a fantastic time when they are there.'
- The safety and well-being of residential pupils is of paramount importance to the staff and school. Staff are extremely vigilant and take swift action should they have any concerns about a residential pupil's health, safety or well-being. Residential pupils say they feel safe when they are residing at school.
- The school is managed by an experienced, competent headteacher and head of care. The organisation has a three year plan in place which includes an agenda

for improvement. This clearly demonstrates their commitment to the ongoing improvement of their service and the outcomes for residential pupils in their care. Staff are well supported and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

- The seamless 24-hour curriculum enables student to benefit from extended services and activities personalised to their individual needs and interest. There is not a day that goes by whereby residential pupils do not have an opportunity to undertake a wide-range of activities that strengthens their skills, interests, knowledge and enhance their physical well-being.
- The national minimum standards are met with no weaknesses identified that have a direct impact upon the care provided to residential pupils. There are two areas for improvement. These relate to improving entries in some records and staff's continued vigilance with regards to a few fire doors that are sometimes left open.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The outcomes for the residential experience are outstanding. Residential pupils are flourishing, because of the opportunities afforded to them when utilising the residential provision. They enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff which are built upon honesty and trust. Residential pupils regularly engage in playful banter with staff and clearly enjoy spending time with them, for example, going sailing, and running.

They develop a sense of fair play and are very supportive of one another, for example, changing planned activities to ensure others are not excluded or left on their own. Residential pupils have a strong sense of belonging and have lots of positive things to say about staff. They say, 'staff are great, they are really here for us'; 'it is great what we get to do afterschool,' and 'we can have a laugh with them and they keep us safe.' Residential pupils enjoy each others company. They regularly visit one another on the different residential 'dorms' and enjoy 'chilling out' with their friends.

Developing independence is a main strength of the residential provision. Consequently, residential pupils develop highly effective independence skills. This means they are being extremely well prepared for adulthood. Young people are actively encouraged dependant upon their age and stage of development to develop a wide range of life skills such as cooking, and shopping along with taking part in external activities. This means residential pupils are able to develop a wide range of social skills and citizenship. Staff place a lot of trust upon residential pupils, they enable them to travel independently to various activities and meet with their friends in the community.

The high levels of trust given to young people is well received by young people. They

say, 'they (staff) trust us and we don't want to let them or ourselves down.' For some young people this has significantly enhanced their outcomes. Initiatives, such as 'travel train' have enabled them to overcome their apprehensions of using public transport. This has considerably enhanced their confidence and self esteem. Consequently, they are able to access a wider range of activities independently and are confident to act as mentors to other residential pupils. Parents say that young people 'love the activities on offer especially the bikes, sports, going out with friends and being independent.' They also say staff are, 'getting them ready for the big world out there, by understanding how and what happens in the real world.'

Residential pupils are increasing in confidence as they engage in a wide range of stimulating, interesting, challenging and rewarding activities. This is made possible by the commitment of all school staff to share their interests with them. Residential pupil's specific interests, such as, repairing bicycles and cycling, are actively promoted. Residential pupils enjoy a wide variety of activities each night which include; outdoor swimming pool, cooking, shopping, football, cricket, bike riding and exploring the woods. Residential pupils are keen to tell visitors about how much they enjoy their surroundings. They gain great pleasure from watching the wildlife, especially the badgers that come to feed outside their window each night. Young people explain they are in discussion with staff to set up night cameras to observe their nocturnal movements and are looking forward to trying out their bat locators. Residential pupils are actively encouraged to try new activities, such as sailing. They beam with pride when it is suggested that they may want to take a qualification in this.

Residential pupils are at the very heart of every thing the school does. They feel valued and respected, because their views are actively sought, valued and are acted upon. Residential pupils feel empowered as they explain that by talking to staff they were able to change how the activities were organised each night. This resulted in them having a greater say in what they want to do and having a wider choice of activities each night.

Residential pupils are actively involved in keeping themselves fit and healthy, for example, reminding staff to get them up at 0600 so that they can go for a run before school. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of eating healthily. Health care plans are very well written and are tailored to the specific needs of each young person. These actively contribute to residential pupils staying fit and healthy. This is further supported by staff's innate understanding of each young person's individual needs.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential provision and care is outstanding. Residential pupils benefit from a seamless 24-hour curriculum. This effectively enables them to maximise the opportunities that these extended services and activities offer and which are tailored to their specific needs. Similarly friends and family are invited to

the residential provision to have tea and engage in activities with the young people. This actively promotes young people's self-esteem, social skills and sense of belonging.

Care plans are comprehensive and allow the uniqueness of each residential pupil to shine. Care plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that the school is consistently meeting their individual needs. Young people's views are evident within their placement plan. Residential pupils are provided with a range of options such as extended stays and the amount of overnight stays provided. This enables young people to have taster sessions and be gradually introduced to overnight stays. Parents say their children are making good progress at school and this is because, 'they (school) have provided all that they need.' Care plans carefully consider young people's contact arrangements with their friends and family. Young people say they are able to keep in touch via the house telephone and their own mobile telephones and that they are able to meet with friends in the community.

Staff provide residential pupils with excellent pastoral care, Residential pupils are confident to approach staff should they have any concerns or worries. Residential pupils say, 'I know they (staff) will help me sort things out.' Residential pupils are able to exercise their rights. This is because they are aware of other support networks available to them such as children's help lines, Children's Rights Director and the local designated officer (LADO).

Residential pupils are empowered to make a positive contribution towards their school life. This level of positive engagement enables young people to enhance their self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. Consequently, residential pupils are able to overcome barriers that have previously hindered their learning and attainment. Residential pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to build social networks, including awards for outdoor education. This gives young people a real sense of community engagement.

Staff promote consistent, high aspirations for residential pupils. They are fully committed to ensuring young people have the best opportunities and can achieve to their full potential. Consequently, young people want to achieve and are making very good progress with their education.

Young people's health needs are effectively supported. Residential pupils say, 'staff look after us when we are ill,' and 'they make sure I get my medication at the right time.' Highly effective systems for the administration of medication mean residential pupils always receive their medication on time, even when away from the setting. Residential pupil's health needs are remarkably well supported. This is because a designated health care professional visits the school on a regular basis and they are provided with a 'drop in' service provided by the school nurse. Consequently, young people are able to discuss any health care issues in confidence with an appropriate person. Residential pupils are taking responsibility for their own health care needs, for example, some are attending smoking cessation groups. While some have not yet

fully given up they acknowledge that they have been able to cut down on the amount they smoke.

Residential pupils confirm they have access to a wide range of fruit, healthy snacks and drinks while in residence. Each 'dorm' is able to choose their evening meal and young people are encouraged to help in its preparation. This often results in four different evening meals being prepared each night. Young people say the food is good and they enjoy the opportunities to go shopping by themselves. Residential pupils are also provided with the opportunities to have a takeaway or to eat out at local restaurants.

The accommodation for resident groups is warm, welcoming, domestic in style, comfortable and is well maintained. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms with posters and items from home, such as laptops. Residential pupils are very much at home here. This is evident from their relaxed behaviour and the level of pride they take in showing visitors around the units.

Residential pupils' safety

The safety of the residential experience is outstanding. Residential pupils are protected as staff have an excellent understanding of the schools safeguarding procedures. Staff are extremely confident in instigating these procedures in order to protect young people from potential harm. This ensures young people receive effective care and support at the right time. Staff are proactive and will escalate concerns if they feel a response is not suitable. This means young people are exceptionally well protected from harm. The creation of a safeguarding project which encompasses school governors, staff and pupil representative has enabled all involved to provide additional guidance training and support for young people. This means they are more aware of the support systems available to them and are able to keep themselves safe.

There is clear information around the school informing staff, visitors and young people what to do should they have a concern regarding child protection. Residential pupils are given access to independent persons whom they can contact directly should they have a concern. The process for recording incidents, concerns and child protection referrals are robust. Staff and governors are trained in child protection at levels that reflect their level of responsibility. There are robust systems in place for the safe recruitment of staff, which assesses their suitability to work with young people. Visitors are monitored and effectively chaperoned at all times.

Residential pupils are very aware of their own safety. They talk knowledgeably about the dangers of cyber-bullying and other forms of bullying. Young people say bullying is not a problem for them. They say, 'the dorm deals with any and all cases of bullying.' Residential pupils are confident that staff will assist them in resolving any difficulties relating to any form of bullying. Staff are aware that bullying takes many forms and are vigilant with regards to comments young people may make. This

means they are able to sensitively address any issues, such as name calling before it becomes an issue.

Being missing from the residential provision is not an issue for these young people. Detailed systems are in place should a residential pupil be missing. All staff are familiar with the procedure and the action they need to take to try and locate the young person. Clear information is in place which can be shared with police such as recent photographs of the young person so that they can be located quickly and safely.

Clear, comprehensive behaviour management strategies are in to support individual residential pupil's needs. These are consistently and sensitively applied by staff. Residential pupils are taking responsibility for their own behaviours and are able to redirect other young people's negative behaviours. For example, saying to another young person, 'if you want to behave like that, do it on your own dorm.' This enables this young person to consider and change their behaviour. Sanctions are occasionally applied and the use of restraint is minimal. Young people say these are 'fair' and they have the opportunities to negotiate what the sanction will be. Staff use various skills to encourage residential pupils to develop socially acceptable behaviours. They place great emphasise on building positive relationships with young people and encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions.

Residential pupils are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Young people are very aware of the fire evacuation procedures both for day and night. This means they are able to evacuate quickly and safely in an emergency. The school has recently upgraded a number of fire doors throughout the school and residential provision to improve upon the safety of young people. Many doors are fitted with magnetic self closing devices, which close automatically when the fire alarm is activated, although occasionally some doors not on this system are held open. However, the risk to young people is minimised as staff are aware of this and are generally vigilant in closing these.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The school is professionally and efficiently run by senior managers. They promote a clear vision and values that provide a safe, stable and caring environment for young people residing at the school. The head of care and staff are passionate about what they do. Their commitment to providing high quality care to each residential pupil is highly commendable. The school effectively reduces barriers so that each young person makes as much progress as possible in line with their starting points. The school is highly committed to the sustained improvement in the quality of care.

Robust and thorough systems are in place to review the quality of care and identify areas for improvement and any action to be taken. The school's three-year plan encapsulates the school vision and clearly identifies areas for ongoing improvement

such as the refurbishment of the residential units to create a more homely environment for young people. School governors are highly committed to ensuring all young people receive the best possible care and education. They meet regularly with the headteacher and head of care to discuss the residential provision and are helping to drive forward future developments. They visit the residential units on a monthly basis and compile a report. These are comprehensive and show time is taken to seek the views of residential pupils.

Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's diverse needs. Effective planning results in young people's needs being met exceptionally well in practice. Staff receive regular supervision and have very good opportunities to attend additional training courses to gain new qualifications and skills. The deployment of staff is child-focused and gives young people excellent continuity of care from people they trust and respect. The school values the rights and of individuals to respect and dignity and have created an environment when people's differences are accepted.

The system for dealing with complaints is fair, transparent and includes the right to appeal. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

The rapport between staff and young people is fabulous. Residential pupils genuinely enjoy spending time with staff. This is strengthened by the comments made by young people which describe the staff as, 'great,' they really care about us,' they are always there for us,' and 'they want the best for us.'

The school works well with parents and is constantly looking at new ways in which to engage with them. This has resulted in the school's first newsletter being sent out with the end of year reports and more open evenings for parents to talk to care staff and review what is happening with their child. Staff are sensitive to parent's requests such as contacting them via email instead of by telephone. Parents are pleased with the levels of consultation and engagement. They say they could not ask for better for their children and that the school meet all of their needs.

All required policies and procedures are in place and are known by those required to implement them. Records and documentation are generally comprehensively maintained and stored securely. Although, there are a few minor omissions in some records such as missing dates and times. Also on a very small number of occasions confidentiality has not been maintained in the sanctions record. However, this does not have a direct impact upon the care provided to residential pupils.

All recommendations from the previous inspection have been met and all previous outstanding practices have been sustained. Governors now provide a monthly written report on the quality of care and all placement plans contain comprehensive information about each young person's individual needs. This has improved upon the quality of care and has enabled the school to drive forward further improvements.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure all records are consistently contain the required information and maintain confidentiality in particular when they are reviewed, time and dates of events
- ensure staff remain vigilant with regards to the wedging open of fire doors.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22/06/2012

Dear residential pupils,

Inspection of Cloughwood Special School

I would like to say a really big thank you to all of you for making me feel so welcome during my visit and for completing our surveys. It was a pleasure to meet you and have the opportunity to talk to you. Your views are very important and helped me to make some decisions about the residential provision. I also took into consideration what your parents had to say about the school. As a result, I think you are cared for in an outstanding school.

It was great to hear how well you are all doing and that you really enjoy spending time on residence. I think staff want the very best for each of you and go out of their way to ensure you have all the help and support you need.

It was wonderful to see you all enjoying yourselves on your various outings. Thank you to those of you who allowed me to go to the outdoor pool and sailing with them. I had a fabulous time and thanks for not soaking me at the pool! It was great to hear that you are taking part in activities that are important to you such as bike rides and repairing the bikes, football, running, exploring the woods and watching out for the local wildlife.

I think it is fabulous that you get time to spend on your own with friends, going to the cinemas, shopping and parks. This is because of the positive relationships you have with staff, which enable you to work together to support your independence. Your views are actively sought by staff and where possible are acted upon. This means you have a greater say in how things are organised and you are able to bring about change, such as how activities are organised.

Staff are committed to keeping you safe and ensure that you get the right help and support when you need it most. They look after you when you are ill and ensure you get your medication at the right time. You enjoy a wide range of healthy meals and snacks.

Thank you once again for all your help. It was an absolute pleasure to meet you all and to see how well you are all doing.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Scully