

# Vale of Evesham School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Unique reference number for social care** SC043049  
**Unique reference number for education** 117058  
**Inspection dates** 11/06/2012 to 13/06/2012  
**Inspector** Martha Nethaway

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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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

The school is maintained by a local education authority, Worcestershire County Council Department of Education and the school is directly responsible to a governing body. Vale of Evesham School provides education for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and learning disabilities. The school caters for 166 pupils aged two – 19. There are 116 boys and 50 girls. 15 of these are residential pupils, who board on a weekly basis. The school's last inspection was in July 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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. Residential pupils benefit because the residential provision is highly inclusive. Relationships between staff, parents, carers and the quality of specialist input from the trans-disciplinary professionals are highly effective. Collaborative and partnership working is highly effective and supports outstanding outcomes for residential pupils.
- Helping residential pupils to enjoy their boarding experience and achieve their potential is outstanding. They enjoy an extensive range of recreational and purposeful activities. This promotes excellent outcomes for residential pupils in relation to their independence and social skills.
- Residential pupils are making outstanding progress in relation to their health, social and independence skills through a stimulating, challenging and enriching environment. This enables them to become confident and responsible.
- The school has robust procedures in place for the safe recruitment of staff. These are effectively implemented and monitored in practice.
- Staff commitment to the promotion of residential pupils' welfare and safety is underpinned by effective monitoring, training, policies and leadership. The school successfully adopts an inclusive and consultative style of leadership and management that respects and takes account of the views of all.
- Leadership and management are visionary and residential provision is well led. A consistency of approach is a key driver in the school. The school continually evaluates working practice, quality of care and outcomes for residential pupils.
- Staff are dedicated and provide a high quality residential experience. Residential

pupils' relationships are formed on trust and value is placed on individuality. Staff embrace equality and diversity in their daily practice.

- Parents and carers receive excellent communication from the residential provision. Contact is easy and welcomed.
- All of the national minimum standards are met.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils' social development is supported by the excellent, inclusive and holistic approach taken by staff. Residential pupils are strongly encouraged to succeed in reaching their full potential. One residential pupil commented, 'I am happy and confident with the things I do while staying here. I can play games and have fun with my friends.' Residential pupils benefit from many enriching experiences, for example, they each have individual targets to work towards. One residential pupil commented, 'I can now do things for myself. Like this evening, I hung my clothes in my wardrobe by myself.'

Residential pupils make excellent progress in developing their communication skills, social skills and independence. They become highly proficient at using different communication tools such as, visual and electronic aids and sign language to express their needs, choice and desire. This is because they are encouraged to explore and interact and as a result become active participants in learning how to communicate.

Residential pupils understand and accept that high standards of behaviour are expected. They know and understand what is expected of them. Good behaviour is achieved through the reinforcement of good behaviour through the extensive praise, encouragement and good example set by staff. One residential pupil explained, 'We receive reward stars and I have collected loads and they are displayed on the board.' One staff member commented, 'We put a lot of effort into providing structure, routine and having a predictable environment for residential pupils to thrive. They feel valued and respect each other.'

Residential pupils' health and wellbeing is actively promoted. They become and remain physically fit and learn about how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. All residential pupils are encouraged to take part in an extensive programme of activities, for example, youth club, swimming, cooking and trampoline club. One residential pupil commented, 'I have enjoyed working in our new vegetable and flower garden that we have created. We have taken photographs and made posters to celebrate our work.' Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the view that activities are safe and enjoyable.

Residential pupils participate in the residential forum which actively engages the voice of pupils. They have made a difference by suggesting and introducing recycling of clothes for fundraising. Similarly, they have made links with a local restaurant and

made new friends.

Residential pupils are well prepared for a successful transition to the next stage of their education. Excellent work takes place at this important time for planning and securing future direction. For example, care plans fully address young people's needs in relation to further education, health, transport, work, relationships and hobbies. Staff consider and support the interests, skills, abilities and aptitudes of residential pupils when arranging work experience. One residential pupil commented, 'I feel very happy on these days, it makes me more confident and helps me with my independence. I don't have to depend on my mum.'

### **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. Residential pupils benefit as a result of the positive and supportive relationships with care staff. The links between the care staff and academic staff are highly formed. Excellent practice is openly shared. For example, behavioural and communication strategies are consistently applied in practice and firmly embedded. One member of staff commented, 'We work collaboratively as a team like for example, developing effective use of objects of reference. One residential pupil now has her own bag which we use in the residential suites and in the school.' As a result, continuity and consistency of practice is highly accomplished.

Residential pupils are consistently cared for and supported as unique individuals. As far as possible they are offered the same rights, choices and opportunities as other pupils of their age and culture. Care planning is comprehensive, versatile and thorough. All residential pupils benefit from well documented care plans that accurately describe their abilities and identify where additional support is needed. Staff earnestly review care plans each term and progress is well monitored and supported. As a result, residential pupils make exceptional progress given their starting point.

The quality of the extra-curricular and leisure opportunities is excellent. Residential pupils enjoy a full range of indoor and outdoor pursuits. Many of the activities are extended to the local community. For residential pupils this helps integrate them with society, develop their self-esteem and provides new life experiences. One residential pupil commented, 'We had a party and invited the local playground committee to celebrate. It was great fun dressing up.' As a result, residential pupils are taking part in purposeful and fun activities.

Residential pupils benefit from the trans-disciplinary approach which includes direct access to medical, speech and language and psychological support. The school achieves one of its key aims by adopting a consistent approach across the different specialisms throughout the school and residential setting. Through this the holistic needs of residential pupils are extensively considered and met.

The quality of the school's catering arrangements is excellent. This is underpinned by the school's recent achievement of the five star environmental kitchen rating. Similarly, the school has achieved Healthy Schools Award, for being a healthy school. All foods are freshly prepared, cooked and nutritious. The school selects foods that reflect many cultures. The school caters unobtrusively and very well for special diets. Residential pupils are encouraged to learn and understand the benefits of healthy eating. They regularly select from a range of healthy options. Each day a different residential pupil chooses the main evening meal. One pupil commented, 'After school we have a snack and it's always a choice of different fruits.' The outcome for residential pupils shows a positive attitude towards healthy eating.

Excellent communication between the residential provision and parents and carers, by the use of a home and school diary, regular telephone calls and e-mail correspondence, helps maintain consistency of care between settings. Feedback is sought through annual surveys about the quality of the residential experience. and these indicate high levels of satisfaction with the residential provision.

The residential provision and facilities are of a high standard and are safe and well maintained. All residential pupils have their own bedroom. One residential pupil commented in their questionnaire, 'I like my room the best.' Another residential pupil commented, 'I have a good time and sleep well.' The environment is stimulating and residential pupils notice the different strategies used. For example, objects are used to provide strong sensory feedback to pupils when touched, grasped or knocked. As a result, residential pupils can take control of sounds, lights, smell, colours and movement.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

Residential pupils' safety is outstanding. Their safety is at the heart of school life. The school is proactive in implementing and sustaining excellent practice. The school procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers are thorough. Since the last inspection, safeguarding practice had continued to be developed and improved on. The school has further enhanced its procedures for volunteers by implementing extra quality assurance checks. Another example includes increasing the number of designated child protection teachers who are trained appropriately by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff receive annual refresher training in safeguarding. As a result, this ensures residential pupils are safe and protected from harm.

Residential pupils feel safe and are safe. The school adopts excellent policies for safeguarding, behaviour management and health and safety. The school meets its aim of providing a safe environment in which everyone is valued and enabled to develop as happy and confident individuals who appreciate their own worth.

The school has highly effective measures to combat bullying including racism, homophobic and cyber-bullying. Residential pupils know about bullying and how to

deal with it. One member of staff commented, 'We encourage respect and understanding of the feelings, views and capabilities of others. For example, circle time is used to help to develop trust more easily and to appreciate the feelings of others.' As a result, incidents of bullying are extremely rare.

Residential pupils' behaviour is excellent. Their personal qualities and social skills are successfully fostered and developed. Staff are fair and seen to be fair. Residential pupils benefit because staff adopt consistent, clear expectations and standards. This allows for the individual's needs to be fully met. Staff help residential pupils to build up coping strategies that help them to manage their own behaviour successfully. One residential pupil commented, 'Staff help me when I am anxious and feeling low.' Residential pupils' progress and development is exceptional given their starting point. As a consequence, staff successfully manage behaviour to create an environment where residential pupils feel valued, cared for and safe.

The environment is physically very safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the residential pupils. All residential pupils are provided with high levels of staffing and supervision. Their whereabouts are known at all times. There are no occasions where a residential pupil goes missing. Residential pupils care, safety and security is given a high priority and always fully and properly considered. Documented risk assessments are carried out individually for each residential pupil and reviewed as circumstances change. These reviews feed into constant improvements. Equally, all activities are assessed and measures carefully taken to promote safety. As a result, this actively promotes the protection of their welfare.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. There is strong leadership with a clear vision. This is due to the highly successful partnership working with parents, carers and the vast multi-agency of professionals that are accessed. The residential provision is viewed as an integral part of school life. Staff show a high degree of professionalism, confidence, and commitment and is dynamic in their approach to their day-to-day practice. One member of staff commented, 'We love our work and to see the progress that residential pupils make is really rewarding and fulfilling. That is a great job.' As a consequence, this permeates through the ethos and culture of the residential provision.

The leadership and management of the school have an accurate and insightful understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school's development plan is well defined with measurable progress indicators and overseen by the governing body. The school is on track to achieve its actions set out in the development plan. The school has recently achieved the Investors in People Award (Gold Level) which recognises a high quality provision. Another example, includes achieving the leading aspect award for Behaviour Management and a leading aspect award for the Autism Resource Centre. This award demonstrates the strengths of the

school's provision in Autistic Spectrum Condition, promoting pupil's personal development and staff leadership and management. As a result, this real pursuit for excellence directly benefits residential pupils care experiences.

The continuity of care for residential pupils is given a high priority. They benefit from the high ratio of staffing and this allows the very best care experiences. Their diverse needs are fully supported and met. One parent commented, 'It has a very homely environment and staff in the boarding provision are excellent with my child and there are always plenty of things for the children to do. They go on numerous trips out and they also do lots of activities within the residential suite.'

The majority of staff are suitably qualified with newer staff currently completing their required training. The continual professional development is well supported by the comprehensive in-house training programme. For example, international recognised key note speakers are invited by the school for special training events.

Staff have access to a full range of policies and procedures that support them effectively with the demands of their work. Staff maintain effective record keeping which supports a clear understanding of the progress and development attained by residential pupils. As a consequence, this enhances the already excellent practice and the promotion of residential pupils' welfare.

Communication with parents, carers and social workers is highly effective. One staff member commented in their questionnaire, 'The residential provision is excellent and is always improving in any way it can.' The outcome for residential pupils is that effective working partnerships allows for excellent consistency of care to be achieved between the residential setting and parents.

The school actively encourages the participation of residential pupils in residential life and their voice and views strongly influence the care provided. The school council ensures that their views are well represented and responded to. For example, residential pupils have had all visual food menus updated; a new vegetable and flower garden and pupil forums are now in place as a result of the requests made. They have successfully influenced menus, activities and recreational events.

## **National minimum standards**

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

## **What should the school do to improve further?**



**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.**



11/06/2012

residential pupils

### **Inspection of Vale of Evesham School**

I visited the residential provision recently. I was really pleased to spend time and to hear and see how much you thoroughly enjoy your residential stays.

You really enjoy the activities and you have a lot of fun with everyone. You told me that you are very well looked after and that you like all that staff that help you. I saw how you enjoyed using the sensory room, playing monopoly and visiting the animals at your local pet shop.

You enjoy doing things for yourself such as unpacking your clothes when you arrive. Equally, clearing away the table after tea time and sorting your laundry.

Thank you for letting me spend time with you and for talking to me about what it is like to live at the school.

Overall, Ofsted have judged the residential provision as outstanding.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Nethaway