

Greenbank Residential School

Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1LD

Inspection dates

27/03/2017 to 29/03/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The quality and consistency of care that residential students receive are outstanding. Their physical, emotional, social and educational needs are clearly reflected in high-quality planning documents and assessments of risk. Plans and strategies are reviewed and updated regularly, and this keeps them current.
- Developing practical skills and promoting greater independence are a focus for much of the work undertaken with residential students. This is acknowledged by many parents as a real area of strength.
- Residential students look forward to their time in residency. They enjoy being with friends and having opportunities to develop their social networks through the school's wide use of community-based facilities.
- Safeguarding and keeping vulnerable students safe are a significant area of improvement. Students consistently say they that feel safe in school, an opinion that is shared by parents and carers.
- There is an excellent level of communication between students and staff. This promotes high levels of consultation where students have a voice and contribute regularly to certain aspects of the residential provision. Making choices is well established in daily working practices.
- The residential provision enjoys high status at the school. It is well organised and managed. An experienced, long-serving and well-qualified staff group has the knowledge, understanding and skills both to recognise and meet the complex needs of the students in its care.

- Parents recognise and appreciate the residential provision provided. They can see the positive effects that the provision has on their child, such as them developing transferable skills that benefit the family in general, as well as preparing students to maximise their independence skills.

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 that each written care plan drawn up for residential pupils is dated.
- When making an entry on CPOMS, ensure that staff identify any third party appearing in the write-up, for example 'staff', 'pupil' or some other designation.
- Improve the evidence that the school has contacted the previous employer to confirm details of their employment and their reason for leaving.

Information about this inspection

Notice of the inspection was by a telephone call to the school at 8.30am on the first day of the inspection. Details of the inspection were confirmed with the headteacher and then followed up by an email which also contained a letter of confirmation, a letter to parents (Parent View) and a copy of Annex A.

During the inspection, the following activities took place. Each of the residential apartments were visited on more than one occasion. Informal discussions with residential students took place when the residential areas were visited after school, in the early evenings and in the early morning. Daily routines were observed which highlighted interaction between residential staff and students. Meals were shared with students and staff, covering breakfast, lunch and the evening meal.

In addition, meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, head of boarding, senior residential staff, residential staff and the designated safeguarding leads. Three students were chosen to be case tracked, which included discussions with their parents. Further information was received from other parents as well as safeguarding professionals.

Inspection team

Graham Robinson

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Greenbank Residential School is a local authority-maintained school for the education of children with special needs aged 11 to 18 years of age. The school offers day and residential provision for students who may have moderate or severe learning difficulties and language and communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder.

The residential provision provides care, support and educational opportunities for 56 young people. A maximum 18 of students can stay each night. There is also capacity for students to have an extended day and to return home to sleep. Each young person has an individual educational residential package for one or two nights during term time.

Greenbank School has recently emerged from a consultation which has impacted on both the day and residential provision. Two key outcomes of the consultation included the closure of weekend provision during term time from September 2015 and a staffing restructure. This has not impacted negatively on the standard of the care support or educational residential provision provided. The school and the governing body are keen to work with other agencies to further develop and extend the residential provision, and to re-open weekend opportunities for young people.

The school buildings are purpose built and situated in their own grounds on a large education campus of other schools and a college of further education. The school is near local leisure and shopping facilities.

The last inspection of the residential provision took place in January 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Residential students enjoy their time spent in residency. They enjoy being with their friends and developing new friendships when they go on community-based activities. One summed up the feelings of many by saying, 'I really enjoy the activities, and it gets me out and about. It helps me to make friends.' They also recognise the benefits of learning new skills which they can use at home. One told the inspector, 'I have learned to do things here that I now do at home to help out. Things like putting the washing in and going to the shops.'

Aspirations for students are high and the residential provision plays a key role in developing and encouraging students to become more independent. Disability is not viewed as a barrier to living a full and fulfilling life. Parents see this as a strength. One summed up her feelings when talking about her own ambitions for her son by saying, 'Our aspirations for his future have grown, like moving from thinking that he may be able to cope with semi-independent living as an adult to a life of full independence.'

A dedicated group of staff who are long serving, experienced and well qualified provide high levels of care and consistency. Relationships between staff, students and parents are outstanding, due to the trust that grows over a period of time. Parents report outstanding levels of communication at the school. They are included in the decision-making process that is ongoing. As a result, students benefit from receiving a consistency of care that is transferable from residency to home.

Residential students have a strong voice due to the excellent levels of communication and consultation. They are encouraged to make decisions and choices when resident, and have opportunities to express opinions through meetings and by being a member of the student council. This boosts both their decision making and self-confidence.

Activities are pre-planned and designed to meet need. A wide range of group and individual activities that are community based take place each week. For example, groups go to the cinema, bowling or for a meal out. Others combine more individual activities such as planning, shopping and preparing a meal, or going to football training with a local team.

Safety is prioritised and promoted well. Policies and procedures are being reviewed and updated regularly. Relationships with external agencies with responsibilities for keeping children safe are strong. Staff are well trained and can demonstrate an understanding around their own role and responsibilities in keeping students safe. Any concerns picked up are immediately shared with the appropriate agencies. As a result, students are kept safe, feel safe and feel valued.

The national standards laid out for residential special schools are being met in full. To improve practice, the report contains three areas for further improvement.

All students who use the residential provision benefit from receiving an outstanding quality of care. The staff have the knowledge and skills to understand and meet the needs of the young people whom they care for. A student who told the inspector that 'Staff are great. They look after us really well' spoke for many others. A parent described the residential provision as being 'instrumental in supporting him to achieve his goals this year and he is now doing things that we could not have imagined this time last year. His social skills, communication, self-care skills and confidence have improved immeasurably since he started attending "resi", and we are so proud of him and grateful to the brilliant staff who support him there.'

Residential students benefit from experiencing an environment in which individual needs, disabilities and identities are fully accepted. Care plans, along with other associated documents such as health plans and assessments of risk, are individualised and of high quality. Strategies are agreed and in place, and this addresses each individual's behaviour. All are reviewed and updated regularly to keep them focused and current. This results in students' needs being constantly monitored, with areas of progress clearly evidenced.

Students regularly make outstanding progress. For example, months of consultation and planning between a mother and her child's key worker to improve her son's tolerance of food, social occasions and limited communication came together as the inspection progressed. As a result, during an evening activity, for the first time ever the student had a meal in a restaurant, watched a film from start to finish, and then rang and told his mother what he had done that evening. This is one of many well-planned success stories of students making significant developments and progress in their lives.

Developing skills that assist students in living a more independent lifestyle is a real strength of the residential provision. Parents recognise and appreciate this. For example, one said, 'The development of his independence skills and his eating habits has been achieved by experiencing residential. This has opened up so many areas for us, like going to restaurants, hotels and having family holidays.' Another told the inspector, 'Coming to the residential side has improved his social and independence skills enormously. This is because his self-confidence has grown and he feels safe in the environment. He is able to go into shops, make sure that he has enough money, pays, takes the shopping home and cooks.'

Students take great pride in their achievements regarding their own development of independence skills. For example, one told the inspector, 'Staff are kind and helpful. They help me to be more independent, which is something we will need to be when I get older. It helps me to help my Mum when I am at home.' Another student said, 'I have learned to do things here that I now do at home to help out. Things like putting the washing in and going to the shops.'

As most students are only resident for one night a week, with the maximum being two nights, the everyday health needs of students remain the responsibility of parents. However, health plans are created and any issues affecting a student's health are known to staff and are well documented. Parents retain responsibility for providing medication,

with tried and tested systems in place to ensure that students have their medication on site when staying over. The storage, administering and recording of medication in the residential provision meet the high standards expected.

The accommodation provided for students is of high quality, and is comfortable and well maintained. The occupancy of bedrooms usually changes from night to night, and staff do an excellent job in personalising bedrooms from one occupant to another. This eye for detail was apparent in the lounge of one house when one evening it was occupied by boys and the next girls. The whole lounge was transformed to create an environment in which students felt comfortable and made themselves at home. This is an example of some of the outstanding practices that are ongoing in and around the residential provision.

Students enjoy the food provided and are given choices at mealtimes. The quality of food is good and all dietary needs are catered for. For example, any special dietary need that a student may have is clearly displayed in office areas. Sharing meals with students proved to be pleasant, sociable occasions.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

The arrangements to protect and keep pupils safe have improved since the last inspection and are now outstanding. The sound safeguarding systems adopted by the school remain, but have been bolstered by a number of developments. For example, a new role created within the school has been the appointment of a family liaison officer. The role is clearly defined and includes working closely with the designated safeguarding team at the school.

Significant progress has been made in recording serious incidents, which include safeguarding and behavioural management events. This has been achieved because the electronic system that was brought in is now fully embedded in the daily working life of the school. Attention has also been paid to ensuring that policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and updated, where necessary, to reflect any recent changes.

The experienced residential staff understand their responsibilities and the role that they have in keeping vulnerable students safe. Any cause for concern is reported immediately to one of the designated safeguarding team members, who have retained excellent working relationships with the external agencies charged with keeping children safe. This, along with the proactive approach taken by the school, has meant that there have been no serious safeguarding incidents affecting the school since the last inspection.

All staff receive initial safeguarding training during their induction, backed up by regular refresher training. Additional training in areas such as sexual exploitation, 'Prevent' and others linked to keeping students safe forms part of the school's ongoing core staff training programme. The school has also improved its filtering system to keep students safe when using the internet.

Security around the whole campus is excellent. For example, access to the external doors and internal movement around the school, including the residential areas, can be achieved only by negotiating a series of locks that require either a fob or knowledge of a

combination of numbers. The result of all this is that students report that they feel safe, and this is backed up by the responses from parents.

Behaviour is well managed and monitored throughout the school. Students say that bullying is not an area of concern for them and that staff are always around, which reduces opportunities for bullying to take place. Incidents that require physical intervention do not occur with any frequency but, when they do, they are well managed. The new electronic system now in daily use has improved the overall quality of recording.

However, a shortfall with the system as it is being currently used has been identified. This links to how, in a report of an event, the designation of any third party mentioned is not always made clear.

Students and staff are provided with a safe environment. Routine checks take place to ensure that safety around the campus is maintained. Service agreements for a range of equipment are in place. Fire drills are timed to ensure that all residential students experience a fire drill out of school time. Risk assessments for hazards around the campus and for activities in the community are in place. These are revised and updated regularly.

Recruitment and clearance procedures meet with statutory requirement and guidance, with all levels of staff being suitably cleared before they take up their post. The school is also implementing its policy of rechecking longer-serving staff, which is deemed to be good practice. Contacting an applicant's previous employer and checking why the previous employment ended is part of the approved procedures that are in place. The evidence to show that this is being done is currently not as consistent or robust as it could be.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Since the last inspection, the senior management team has not changed. Neither has there been much change to the residential staff. The residential provision is well organised and managed. The culture, ethos and working practices developed over the years have remained intact. As a result, students receive consistency of care from people whom they know well, like and trust.

Residential students benefit from being cared for by a team of fully committed staff who have high aspirations and ambitions for them. There is a real team-centred approach in place, with staff regularly helping each other out. This creates a warm camaraderie which translates into a happy, relaxed atmosphere in which students thrive.

Staff receive regular supervision and appraisal which add to the consistency of care being achieved. All residential staff have achieved a professional level 3 qualification and participate in the active staff core training programme which is ongoing. As a result, staff are able to develop new skills and refresh old ones, giving them the ability to manage effectively and look after a group of vulnerable students who have complex needs.

The school looks for continuous improvement, and this is reflected in the development plans in place and in its own assessment of its residential provision. Strengths and areas

identified for improvement are recognised through the regular internal monitoring process that is ongoing. As a result, the residential provision continues to develop and progress. For example, since the last inspection, development and progress have been achieved by creating a new policy for students who go missing, and the format of the care plans has been improved along with the way that individual risk assessments are now being presented. These and other developments, some already reflected in this report, highlight the school's ambition to keep moving forward so that outcomes for its students continue to improve.

The school has an excellent record of compliance. Each of the two recommendations and four areas identified for improvement made at the last inspection have been addressed. This has led to improvements being made to the school's fire policy and assessment of risk, improved procedures linked to staff recruitment, and a greater consistency in reviewing and updating its safeguarding policy. Revised arrangements have been put in place so that students can dine in the evening, and a new 'healthy schools' snacks policy has been devised and shared with students.

There is a clear determination and energy to improve and continue to develop the residential provision, even in these times of austerity. The residential provision continues to prosper and provide an outstanding service to the students who use it and their families. It is a service much appreciated by them, and it is seen as a vital component in students reaching their maximum potential regarding their independence. Often, steps taken towards improvement at any one time can be small yet vital. A parent summed this up when discussing her son by stating, 'He is on a journey to independence. The journey may take longer and require more support because, for him, it takes longer.'

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	111503
Social care unique reference number	SC006624
DfE registration number	896/7106

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	54
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 19
Headteacher	M McCann
Date of previous boarding inspection	26/01/2016
Telephone number	01606 288028
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