

# West Kirby Residential School

West Kirby Residential School, 107–119 Meols Drive, West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside  
CH48 5DH

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained special school for students with autistic spectrum disorder and complex and significant emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

It offers a day school for pupils aged from five to 19, and weekly and part-weekly residential boarding for residential pupils who are aged from 7 to 19. Extended days allow day pupils to join the residential group for the evening, returning home to sleep.

Residential accommodation is in a community-based home, with an attached semi-independent self-contained flat. At the time of this visit, up to five pupils used the residential provision.

The principal of the school oversees the residential provision alongside a residential manager.

### Inspection dates: 6 to 8 February 2023

**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:** 22 June 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children enjoy their experiences at the residential provision. They build secure and trusting relationships with the staff. Inspectors observed children to be relaxed, happy and comfortable while spending time with staff. Additionally, the staff team has positive relationships with parents and communicates regularly with them in relation to their children's care.

Children make good progress because of the time that they spend in the residential provision. Parents said that their children have developed their independence skills and improved their social skills. Key workers use children's personal development profiles to track children's progress, to identify areas where children require additional support and to monitor improvements.

During their stay at the residential provision, children access various recreational and leisure activities according to their interests or hobbies. They also play an active part in the community. Children are involved in the life skills enterprise, and they have worked on the school's enterprise market stall and the school bakery. Children have also been involved in charity work, such as raising money for the RSPCA and making hampers for the local food bank.

Children are in good health. Staff receive relevant training to support children to manage any health conditions. The staff team works hard to promote children's well-being. Staff use their positive and nurturing relationships with children to help them build resilience and to develop their confidence. This is threaded through all children's individual care plans.

Children enjoy their education. They are supported to aspire and make plans for their future. Children's targets from their education, health and care plans are embedded into their placement plans. This ensures that all professionals are working together consistently to meet children's needs. There is an effective relationship between the teaching staff and residential care staff, with teaching staff often supporting in the residential provision and residential staff being present to support children in the school.

Children are listened to, and their views prioritised. Children have been part of the school's council and they engage in an annual residential survey to capture their views about what it is like to live in the provision. Children's meetings take place regularly, enabling children to make suggestions to improve their experiences. Children know how to complain. Staff advocate on behalf of children if they wish to raise concerns. Children also have access to a regular independent visitor, who they enjoy spending time with and talking to.

Children are treated with dignity and respect. They benefit from experiencing an environment in which their individual needs, disabilities and identities are fully

accepted. The staff team is sensitive and responsive to children's identities and family backgrounds. This helps children to develop positive self-esteem and self-perception.

Older children can experience living semi-independently in an attached self-contained flat. This enables children to practise key skills such as budgeting, cooking and travel before they leave the service. Children transition in and out of the residential provision in a planned way. The staff team provides additional support for children and their parents to ensure that there is a smooth transition when children leave the service. This includes implementing clear contingency plans, should the child require further time or support to manage their transition.

Children are provided with a homely, well maintained, and comfortable place to stay. Children personalise their own bedrooms, with pictures of their families and certificates to show off their achievements. Children's suggestions for improvements in the residential provision have been listened to, such as requests for a trampoline in the garden and a smart television for the lounge, both of which have been agreed and actioned by the residential manager.

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

Children and their parents say that children feel safe and are kept safe during their stay at the residential provision. Children have a trusted adult that they can go to when they need support. The use of positive behaviour is fully supported in all aspects of the children's care. Staff effectively support children to regulate their emotions and manage their behaviour without it escalating further.

Children's risk behaviour is identified and understood by the staff team. All children have individualised plans that include clear behaviour management strategies to enable staff to support children in times of crisis. This ensures that the staff team is consistent in its approach and provides the children with a sense of safety and well-being.

Children do not go missing from the residential provision. However, there are robust protocols in place should a child try to leave the provision without permission. Leaders and managers ensure that staff undertake regular training so that their understanding of safeguarding children is current and up to date. This includes areas such as 'Prevent' duty and radicalisation.

Leaders and managers are proactive in their response to safeguarding within the residential service. The head of care, the residential manager and designated safeguarding lead work seamlessly together to protect children. Furthermore, residential staff are very clear on their responsibilities in relation to procedures for reporting and recording any concerns about safeguarding children.

Leaders and managers have effective working relationships with other safeguarding agencies, such as the designated officer and local police officers. This enables them to share concerns and seek advice about action they should take to keep children

safe. Leaders and managers also offer challenge when working with other professionals, when appropriate, to ensure that the child is at the centre of the service.

There are now clear medication procedures in place. The nurse communicates regularly with the residential staff, to ensure that medication is managed safely and monitored effectively. As children move between the school and residential provision, there is a daily handover between the school and residential staff regarding children's medication.

Safer recruitment is robust. Careful consideration is given to those who are employed to work with the children and because of this, the risk of unsuitable adults working with the children is reduced.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The head of care and the residential manager work collaboratively and have a shared vision for the residential provision. They are organised and are positive role models for both the children and the staff team. They have a good understanding of the children's plans and their individual needs. Leaders and managers also drive achievements and the attainment of permanence for children's futures.

The provision is appropriately staffed and resourced. Agency staff are not used. This ensures that there is continuity of care provided to the children by a stable, qualified and experienced staff team.

The staff team values the support that they get from leaders and managers. All staff are provided with regular practice-related supervisions. Supervisions are purposeful in supporting staff in their roles and responsibilities. Staff also have their practice annually appraised. The targets set for staff are focused on developing the residential service and promoting personal development.

Staff have undertaken a wide range of training to meet the needs of children. Staff have been supported to reflect on relevant guidance and how this directs their practice. This has enabled staff to strengthen their professional curiosity and feel confident in challenging each other's practice.

The residential manager's self-assessment report provides a reflective account of the effectiveness of the provision and changes that have been made to support positive experiences for children. The residential development plan provides a clear plan for the provision and incorporates the views of children and staff. Leaders and managers evidence that they use these views to make improvements to the provision.

Governors visit the residential setting on a more regular basis, to enable them to have better oversight of the residential provision and how it operates. However, the residential provision is not always a standing item at the governing body meetings.

There is no evidence of robust scrutiny so as to ensure that children's experiences and the quality of provision are systematically kept under review, by the governing body.

Independent visitor reports evidence that appropriate recommendations are made in line with the National Minimum Standards. The residential manager ensures that all recommendations are discussed at team meetings, reflected in a comprehensive action plan, and addressed promptly. Children and staff are spoken to during the independent visits. However, parents' views in relation to the quality of care their children receive are not captured in the reports.

Leaders and managers have successfully addressed all the points for improvement made at the last inspection. All National Minimum Standards are met.

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

### **Points for improvement**

- 2.2 The residential provision is a standing or regular item at the governing body meetings to ensure that children's experiences and the quality of provision are systematically kept under review. This should ensure that there is robust scrutiny of the residential arrangements by the governing body.
  
- 3.2 Monitoring visits should include conversations with parents/carers where relevant.

### **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:** SC018958

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Sian Thomas

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Inspector

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