

Bleasdale School

Bleasdale School, 27 Emesgate Lane, Silverdale, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 0RG
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Bleasdale School is a residential special school operated by Lancashire County Council Education Department and registered with the Department for Education. The school's primary function is to provide children and young people who have profound and multiple learning disabilities with a positive and safe educational experience while boarding at the school. Up to 19 children and young people reside at the school for up to a maximum of 38 weeks of the year. The residential unit is situated across the road from the day school. There are currently six children accessing the residential provision. The residential provision caters for the diverse needs of the children and young people, whose stays are designed to meet their individual needs. The last residential inspection took place in March 2017.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 March 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 7 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children and young people are thriving in the residential provision and thoroughly enjoy their stays. A parent said, 'Bleasdale is more than just a school. They [the school] seem to travel the journey with us, celebrating the joys, feeling our struggles, sharing our worries and offering reassurance.'
- Children and young people benefit from a detailed and comprehensive care package that is tailored to their specific needs. Staff have an innate understanding of each child and young person's needs, and meet these extremely well in practice.
- Children and young people continue to make excellent progress across all areas of their development. A key strength this year has been the emphasis on encouraging children and young people to be as independent as possible in relation to their starting points.
- Excellent communication between parents, the school and the residential provision means that nothing is missed.
- Children and young people enjoy an extensive range of self-chosen activities. They are actively and consistently encouraged to put forward suggestions about what they would like to do. As a result, young people have a strong voice within the residential provision that is clearly heard and acted upon.
- Safeguarding is a key priority. Staff have an excellent understanding of each child and young person and their vulnerabilities, and take effective steps to minimise any potential risks to their safety, health and well-being.
- A key strength is the school's approach to inclusion. Staff are highly skilled in modifying activities so that everyone can take part.
- A highly committed and dedicated leadership team oversees the residential provision. The team is well supported by the governing body, which sees the residential provision as an intrinsic part of the school.
- Parents are extremely complimentary about the residence and the support that is given to them and their children. One parent said, 'I have nothing but praise for the staff'; others acknowledged that their children are learning new things every day.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Monitoring reports should be more thorough and evaluative. This would ensure that leaders and managers are clear on the areas for development to help to drive forward the continuous improvement of the service.

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

Recommendation

- Enhance further the monitoring carried out by the governors and independent person.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their stays at the residential setting. Parents value highly the caring and trusting relationships that their children have with the staff. A parent said, 'There is nowhere else in the world that I would feel comfortable leaving him. This is unique, as I know that the staff care about him and look after him. I know he is safe.' Parents are extremely complimentary about the support offered to them, especially when their children stay for the first time. Several parents said that they were 'overwhelmed' by the support that they have received from the staff and the reassurances that the staff offer.

Children and young people are thriving because of their highly personalised and bespoke care packages. Staff have an in-depth understanding of each child and young person's diverse needs, and meet these extremely well on a day-to-day basis. Children and young people make excellent progress as a result of their stays. This is in part because of the extensive range of activities offered to them. Activities complement and enhance the opportunities and experiences that the children and young people receive in school.

Children and young people are instrumental in selecting what they would like to do, for example going to scouts, youth clubs and sensory clubs, and going on days out with the staff. It is clear that the staff, children and young people enjoy spending time together as their voices and laughter reverberate around the setting.

Staff are highly skilled in adapting to the unique communication styles of each child and young person. The staff make this complicated process look easy, as they seamlessly swap their methods of communication to converse with different children. Young people have become skilled in using their personal communication aids since the last inspection and this has significantly enhanced their ability to communicate with others. It also promotes their independence and successfully enables them to make choices.

A key strength of the setting is the strong emphasis on helping children and young people be as independent as possible. Consequently, children and young people are making great strides in this area, for example bathing with less assistance from staff, helping to take their laundry downstairs and getting dressed by themselves. Each step towards independence is celebrated, even when things have not gone to plan, for example praising a young person for getting dressed, even though their jumper is on back to front. This is because the act of getting dressed unaided is a significant achievement for them. This not only supports the young person's independence, but also makes the world much more accessible to them. A parent said, 'Even at 18 years of age my child continues to learn something new every day.'

Children and young people are treated with the utmost dignity and respect. This is

evident through the care taken by staff when they are attending to children and young people's personal care needs, and when young people are using items such as the trampoline. Inclusivity is a key strength of the setting. Staff are highly skilled in modifying the activities to meet the individual needs of each child and young person. A parent said, 'No child is left out, whatever their disability they have they are included in every activity, this is the magic of this school. It's a magical place.'

Children and young people's health needs are very well supported. They benefit from 24-hour nursing cover. This means that should a child or young person be taken unwell at any point, then they have nursing staff to support them. Healthcare plans are detailed and provide excellent insight into the complexities of each child and young person's medical needs, and the action needed to support them to maintain good health. The plans are constantly reviewed to make sure that they are up to date and accurate. This is exemplified in the improvements made to children and young people's epilepsy care plans regarding when to call the emergency services.

Children and young people's health is further enhanced because of the healthy and nutritious meals that they are provided with. The chef carefully tailors the meals to meet the individual needs of each child and young person. Children and young people are encouraged to try new foods. As a result, a number of young people are now eating much healthier food options. This is promoting and sustaining their health and well-being.

Transitions in and out of the school are managed extremely well. Excellent communication with parents, carers and other professionals means that nothing is missed during this process. Parents are provided with extensive information about the school provision and other options that are available to their children post 19. This vital information helps parents to make informed choices about the next steps for their children. Parents shared their views that nothing is too much trouble for the staff.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children and young people's safety and well-being are given the highest priority. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective in ensuring that children and young people are kept safe from harm. Staff use their understanding of the children and young people's vulnerabilities and specific needs to make sure that their practice effectively promotes their safety. A parent said, 'Safeguarding is amazing. We cannot use our phones here, the thumbprint access provides reassurance for parents that their children cannot exit the building without staff support and also that no one can gain access to them.' Another parent said that they felt confident and reassured because when they have arrived at 'random' times, they have always experienced a 'calm and harmonious environment'.

Safeguarding is intrinsic to everything that the staff do, and is carefully embedded

into their practice. Staff safeguard children and young people effectively while enabling them to take safe risks. This enables children and young people to explore new opportunities and experiences, such as sensory youth clubs. This significantly enhances children and young people's confidence and self-esteem. For example, one young person confidently took an inspector on a tour of the gardens.

Children and young people do not go missing. This is because of the nature of their disabilities and the high staffing levels in place to support them. However, staff are not complacent, and have a clear understanding of the action to take should a child or young person go missing.

Positive behaviour is actively and consistently promoted by all staff. Staff are well trained in behaviour management and physical intervention techniques. This means that they have an extensive range of de-escalation techniques at their disposal, which they utilise effectively. The number of physical interventions has significantly decreased. Staff take the time to get to know the children and young people. Staff successfully identify any potential triggers for the children and young people, and take proactive steps to minimise these. Consequently, staff are able to respond in a coordinated way to support the ever-changing needs of the children and young people.

Children and young people stay in a warm, welcoming and as far as possible homely environment. The residential provision has undergone a number of changes, which have included the creation of a new lounge and dining area that creates a much more homely atmosphere. The installation of a new lift to the first floor means that all young people sleep on the same floor. Bedrooms are personalised and reflect the uniqueness of each child and young person.

Children and young people are further protected because of the robust staff recruitment procedures and the systems for chaperoning visitors around the setting. High staffing levels mean that children and young people continue to be provided with excellent supervision based upon their individual needs and vulnerabilities, both at the setting and when out exploring the community.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Senior leaders are aspirational for the residential setting. They demonstrate collaborative working relationships across all aspects of the school and residence. Consequently, children and young people enjoy a seamless journey through the school and residence. As a result, they continue to make excellent progress in key areas of their lives, including their education, communication, independence and health, and their confidence and self-esteem.

The residential setting remains an indispensable part of the school, and is valued highly by senior leaders and governors. This is evident in the ongoing plans for the continuing development of the residential provision to make it accessible to more

young people.

Leaders and managers are clear about the strengths of the provision and the areas for development. Monitoring by the governing body and the independent visitors takes place on a regular basis. They hold detailed conversations with staff and the care manager, but this is not always reflected in their written reports, which at times are brief and lack evaluation. This is a recording issue. Governors are highly committed to the residential provision. They are confident about challenging the school and managers about the residential provision and this is evident in the records of the governors' meetings.

The care manager continues to be a driving force for change. She is well supported by the care staff, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. She leads by example, offering support and guidance to staff in a sensitive manner to make sure that the children and young people's needs are consistently met to a high standard.

Innovative thinking has resulted in the introduction of new activities for the children and young people. Cinema night is a real success because of the creativity and ingenuity of the staff in transforming the watching of a film into an exciting experience for children and young people. This is done through children and young people making posters and taking part in preparing the snacks and drinks. This helps children and young people to understand what they may experience in a real cinema, and has given families the confidence to take their children out to see films when at home. This approach is an integral thread of the residential provision in providing meaningful and enjoyable experiences. A number of parents have said that they 'fought' to get their children into the school and that they would not want their child to be anywhere else.

Staff receive regular training to refresh their existing skills and to extend their knowledge and understanding. All staff across the school and residence work in a highly collaborative manner to support the children and young people. They regularly work between the school and residence and this gives them greater insight into how the children and young people react to different environments. Professionals and parents said that the staff are strong, committed advocates for children and young people. Staff regularly contribute to various meetings to ensure that the child or young person's voice is heard.

Above all, parents said that they are extremely proud of each of their children's achievements. They said that the staff genuinely care about their children and 'always go the extra mile' to help their children to succeed. One parent summed this up saying, 'I feel valued, included, listened to, and have every confidence in the staff to look after [name of child] and to keep him safe.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC058077

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Kairen Dexter

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Inspectors

Chris Scully, social care inspector (lead)
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