

# 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 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 6 to 8 February 2019

**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:** 13 March 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Young people are firmly at the heart of everything that is done at Bleasdale.
- Bespoke activities allow each young person to experience new things and gain confidence.
- The strong focus on enabling the young people to communicate their wishes, feelings and views means that young people are involved in their care and in making choices.
- Young people's safety and well-being are of paramount importance. Parents said that their children are safe because of the exceptional and well-implemented safeguarding procedures.
- The residential staff work closely with teachers to ensure that each young person's care needs, communication skills and targets for improving are seamless across the two areas.
- Managers and staff are constantly looking for ways to improve and develop the service so that the opportunities and life chances for young people can be enhanced.
- Staff work closely with young people's families so that consistency of care is given. As a result, parents speak highly of the service and they recognise the value of their children being here.
- A highly committed care manager and a dedicated staff team manages the residential provision. External and internal monitoring of the service is robust and helps drive forward improvements and developments.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Young people's health records need more detailed information about the type of seizure activity and the actions that staff take in response and information on why any additional medication is given, such as paracetamol.

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

### **Recommendation**

- Enhance further the records in relation to when young people are unwell and the reason as to why additional medication is administered.

## Inspection judgements

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

The young people have complex medical needs that affect their verbal communication, mobility and learning. However, they receive holistic care that affords them every opportunity available to them. Young people are making exceptional progress across all areas of their lives. A parent said, 'Every small milestone is a massive achievement. I cannot thank the staff enough.'

Young people thoroughly enjoy their time in residence. A range of parents commented on their children's excitement and anticipation of being or returning here. The residential setting has extended access to the overnight provision to day pupils. This has been warmly received and gives the day pupils an opportunity to experience being away from home, being with friends and joining in some of the extensive activities on offer.

Young people have different ways of expressing their views, wishes and feelings. They use Makaton, verbalisation, PECS, pointing and eye movement, touch pads and switches to show what they want or need. Staff know each young person's preferred form of communication. Communication is key, and the staff are highly skilled in this area. They seamlessly transition from discussion with one young person to another, adapting to each young person's communication style. Staff often move pictures around, sign again or repeat a question to ensure that the young person understands the question and that the answer is the same and not just an automatic response. Staff have captured young people's views and put them with supporting pictures onto a Powerpoint presentation. This means that young people can be part of any meeting about them, such as their review meetings. Parents said that their children are empowered, valued and respected.

Comprehensive care plans and information about young people tell the reader the story of the young person and who they are as an individual. In this way, the uniqueness and individuality of each young person shine through. All care plans are created in consultation with the young people, their parents, teachers and healthcare professionals. The care plans tell the story of the child and their progress.

Staff work closely with teachers. Young people have education and residential targets that work seamlessly across both settings. Carefully selected targets are meaningful, achievable and, overall, they contribute to increasing young people's life opportunities. Young people's targets, academic levels and progress are recorded in their education and healthcare plans. An assessment analysis for last year showed that residential pupils have more opportunities to practice their speaking and listening skills and they have made small improvements.

Young people flourish in an environment which is enriched by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which truly engages their interests while helping them to

develop their independence and social skills. This supportive environment also significantly builds young people's confidence and self-esteem. Young people are actively encouraged by staff to pursue their interests and are exceptionally well supported to try new activities, such as Guides and Scouts. One young person wants to be a dancer when he leaves school. He has been attending additional after-school dance sessions to pursue his interest. The young people have recently performed at a dance festival. Their partners were from a nearby primary school. Both schools worked well together, building confidence and making relationships. As well as those performing, other young people from the school played a part in the production, from making props to editing the music, and were duly commended for their part in the production. A parent wrote, 'I just want to say thank you for the wonderful dance festival that you helped [Name of child] be a part of. It was amazing to watch, and I must admit I did shed a few tears. She amazed me with how well she coped with it.'

The residential provision has a new purpose-built rebound building. The senior management applied for funding through various charities and grants and was successful. The rebound building offers privacy and accessibility for all young people. This can be used for fun or part of a physiotherapy session. There are two residential staff that are trained to use the equipment and in this form of exercise. Further to this, a qualified sports teacher has joined the team. He specialised in working with disabled children and has a qualification in rebound therapy. He works across the school and the residential provision so that young people can enjoy this during the day and in the evenings. There is a new sensory circuit room. This helps young people with their dexterity, muscle control, coordination and independence. A young person used a voice output communication device to say, 'I have reached out to make choices during design and technology sessions. While out on a trip, I reached out for materials I wanted to make my cushion with and during a game of hockey I reached out for equipment and accepted prompts to use it.' These milestones are huge for young people and have been built on over time.

The residential provision is using extra funding to have a playground that is accessible to all young people. For example, there will be a wheelchair-accessible trampoline, roundabout, an outside track and a pathway with different forms of material, such as pebble stones, bumps and sponge asphalt. This will help young people when using their wheelchairs in the community. There are extensive plans that have been approved, and work will start in the summer.

The young people have a variety of complex health needs. Staff receive exceptional training in how to administer medication and use medical equipment, such as gastostomy feeds. Risk assessments of young people's health needs are clear and informative. For example, one young person cannot have grapefruit as it affects the medication that he is taking. A nurse oversees the administration of medication. For those young people who experience epilepsy, the staff record any seizure activity, and this is shared with the nursing staff. Overall, the recording of health needs and administration of medication are very thorough. However, in two incidents, records were not as clearly recorded; in one case, times of seizures were not recorded, and in another a young person was given paracetamol but there was no reason as to

why. This was discussed with the nurse and care manager. They took immediate action to put a clearer recording system in place.

Young people are prepared well for independence. A parent said about her daughter, 'Her personal care needs have vastly improved. The occupational therapist was very impressed with how much she has progressed in brushing her teeth and getting dressed. These are small steps for her, but they are massive. All of this contributes to her being able to go to a 52-week adult placement, and without this support she would not be able to go.' Another young person used to have his food blended into a single meal. However, the chef now blends each component separately. This means that staff can recognise what he likes and does not like and are also offering new foods to try, thus extending his dietary intake.

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

Staff genuinely care about young people and want the best for them in life. They build extremely positive relationships with the young people, their parents and carers. This contributes to the excellent ongoing care and support provided.

Young people's safety is of the highest priority. All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection. Thorough reporting procedures ensure that staff act swiftly should they have a concern about a young person's welfare or safety. There have been no safeguarding issues to report, but staff confidently demonstrate their understanding in safeguarding areas, such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.

The care manager was aware that several safeguarding documents had been updated, such as the 'Working together to safeguard children' in September 2018. Staff had already been given some training on this, and further training has been identified. In addition to this, the care manager revisits safeguarding in various formats to ensure that staff's knowledge remains up to date in these areas. For example, the care manager uses the 'seven minutes' safeguarding presentations from the internet in every staff meeting. This is followed by a quiz that assesses the knowledge that the staff have retained.

Detailed care plans give staff excellent explanations about how to use equipment safely. These instructions are supported by photographs to demonstrate what staff must do to keep young people safe. For example, one young person must not be in a prone position but on her side if on the floor. Photographs show how to position cushions for support. There are detailed moving and handling plans that link to risk assessments and mobility plans. All equipment used by young people is checked every time the young people use it. Hoists, slings and profile beds are serviced bi-annually.

There are rigorous, up-to-date procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of the

young people. Staff are not risk averse but are extremely proactive in looking at ways in which young people can engage and enjoy the same opportunities as any other young person. Fire drills and evacuation practices enable staff to understand what they need to do and how to do this safely. Staff discuss this with young people and try to make them fun because they are aware that this can be distressing for them.

Young people have not been missing from the residence. Staff are aware that there is always the potential for this. They have a clear understanding of the processes to follow should this occur. Similarly, physical intervention has not been used. Staff are skilled at identifying when young people are upset or anxious. Consequently, they can initiate strategies to support them and reduce their anxieties, such as providing them with the opportunity for some quiet time.

Young people's good behaviour and achievement of their targets are rewarded. They receive points that go towards their school team colour. Young people hang their achievement tags on a tree that is positioned in the main corridor for all to see, and these are then read out at the school assembly on a Friday. As a result, their achievements are recognised by the whole school.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures keep young people safe. The school's business manager has challenged references that have limited information about an applicant's suitability. As a result, more in-depth references are secured verbally. All visitors to the school and residence are required to sign in and are appropriately supervised on site. Visitors cannot move around the settings independently, and a thumbprint release mechanism protects internal doors. These systems assist in providing a safe environment for young people.

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

A highly committed and dedicated care manager leads the care provision. She works in partnership with the headteacher to continually improve the opportunities available to the young people. For example, the residence is now all on one floor. This has created a more homely and functional environment for the young people to use.

The care manager uses her self-evaluation form well to reflect on past developments, to set new targets and to highlight areas for improvement. A termly learning walk is completed by a range of professionals including teachers and governors to observe the impact of developments. They comment on what is good and how it may be improved. For example, some young people made bird feeders and watched in the garden. It was observed that this could have been improved with some sensory items, such as attaching feathers to photographs or soft play toy birds that wheelchair users could have reached out for.

In addition, the care manager is looking at services that provide qualified independent visitors to undertake external monitoring of the service. It is envisaged

that the current independent visitor will work in partnership with them, but each will have a separate role. The independent visitor has observed activities and events. She has made good observations of how to improve the service, such as having a quieter area to greet guests, as the young person who was welcoming guests used a switch communication that could not be heard over the hustle and bustle of people arriving.

There is a core group of staff who have worked together for some considerable time. Two members of staff have left, and two new members of staff have joined the team. Staff said that they are fully included in discussions about the young people, are well trained, are confident to challenge each other and other professionals and that they are included in the development of the service. One new member of staff has taken her idea of a beauty and hair therapy session to the care manager. She has been tasked with putting the plans together, with steps, targets and outcomes to be gained and will present this to the staff team soon. Most of the staff team have completed the level 3 qualification in caring for young people. New staff are registered on a similar course at the start of their employment.

There has been an extensive range of new initiatives and developments since the last inspection. Night staff are now completing one evening shift a week. This means that young people get to know who is caring for them in the night and it lessens their anxieties when they wake up in the night. Residential staff now spend an hour in the morning in school. This gives them the opportunity to provide a clear handover to teachers and to settle the young people into their classrooms. Higher-level teaching staff work two nights in the residential setting. This means that residential staff can ask for advice and support, and this practice promotes excellent sharing of information across the teams.

All staff have completed a values workshop, and this underpins the school's ethos. A member of staff said, 'We have found that staff are more aware of their behaviour and we hold each other to account.' A parent, a member of staff, a governor and the headteacher all said that there has been a different 'buzz' to describe the positive atmosphere in the school since this training. In conjunction with this, a governor said that artwork or pictures would enhance the dark hallway. The care manager researched this and found jigsaw puzzle art work and the young people put their 12 values on them. These brighten up the hallway and they are a reminder to staff and young people of the school's values. These values are also used in staff supervision and appraisals with staff to demonstrate how they use them in everyday dealings with parents and in caring for the young people. This shows that the school has not stood still and that it is continually evolving.

There is a full board of governors. They have different roles in assessing the residential and school provision. For example, four governors have responsibility to oversee the residential provision, and four oversee the school. Termly monitoring reports are undertaken and these have significantly improved since the last inspection. There is now a policy for governors to ensure that they are aware of the purpose of the visit, how the visit should be arranged and how the visit is reported.



Governors have been part of the values, resilience, recruitment and safeguarding training. Thus, they are more confident in discussing issues with staff and in evaluating the records. A governor said, 'We are a lot more strategic. We challenge the school and we have the confidence to ask the question that needs to be asked.' Reports from the care manager and the headteacher link into the governing board's meetings. As a result, they have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved. Another governor said, 'The care manager and staff continually strive to improve and put forward new developments. However, sometimes we have to rein them in because we want them to do one thing really well before moving onto another project.'

There is a high level of consultation that is used extremely well to improve the service. Parents' comments about their children include: 'She is very happy and content. I cannot speak highly enough of the staff and school'; 'I would recommend it as a centre of excellence to all parents in similar circumstances to our own'; 'Their communication is outstanding and attention to detail is fabulous.' A social worker, in a review, said, 'I want to express once again, in the strongest terms possible, what a positive placement Bleasdale has been. There are highly skilled and experienced healthcare staff, care staff and educational staff to give [Name] the best chance to thrive in an educational and care setting.'

## **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

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Pam Nuckley, social care inspector (lead)  
Chris Scully, social care inspector



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