

# Penn School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

---

**Unique reference number for social care** SC042644  
**Unique reference number for education** 133586  
**Inspection dates** 04/10/2011 to 06/10/2011  
**Inspector** Thomas Webber

---

**School address** Penn School, Rayners Department, Penn, HIGH  
WYCOMBE, Buckinghamshire, HP10 8LZ  
**Telephone number** 01494 812139  
**Email**  
**Headteacher** Mrs Mary-Nest Richardson

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## **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**

Penn School is a secondary school for children with communication difficulties associated with speech and language, Autistic Spectrum disorders and hearing impairments who may have additional physical or learning difficulties. The school is a non-maintained school run by a charitable trust: The Rayners Special Education Trust.

The weekly residential provision can accommodate up to 25 residential pupils, male and female aged 11 to 19 years for a maximum of four nights. At the time of the inspection there were 12 residential and 65 day students. Some pupils use the residential provision on a flexible basis staying for one or two nights per week. The school also offers a breakfast club and evening activities to all pupils as part of the extended school day programme.

Penn School is located in a rural setting in the village of Penn a few miles from the town of Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. The last inspection took place on 6 October 2010.

---

<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/boardingschools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools).

## 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 Penn School is outstanding. The school provides strong, sustained and effective leadership which positively impacts on the overall care provided to residential pupils.
- The school meets the national minimum standards and has met the recommendations identified at the last inspection.
- The procedures for safeguarding residential pupils' safety and well-being are robust and effective.
- There are always sufficient staff on duty. Most staff are qualified and have considerable experience. Staff continue to enhance their expertise through appropriate training. However, the performance of staff is not always appropriately monitored through formal supervision. Communication between the school and residential provision is effective.
- Residential pupils benefit from living in a warm, nurturing, supportive and relaxed environment where positive relationships exist between residential pupils themselves and staff.
- The parents of residential pupils value the care and support provided to their children. This has enabled the residential pupils to make significant progress emotionally, socially and academically. This in turn, enhances their self-esteem and confidence.
- The behaviour management of the residential pupils is excellent and significant progress has been achieved in this area of practice.
- The health and dietary needs of residential pupils are well met.

- The promotion of equality is well understood and practiced well within the residential provision. The diverse and complex needs of residential pupils are extremely well catered for.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. The experience of boarding provides residential pupils with opportunities to develop independent life and social skills to assist them with the transition into adulthood.

Residential pupils live in a warm, nurturing, supportive, relaxed and calm environment where positive relationships exist between residential pupils themselves and staff. Staff undertake their duties in a very caring and supportive manner and residential pupils are relaxed and at ease in their company. Residential pupils enjoy and benefit from the positive experience they receive from boarding. They are supported to make significant progress emotionally, socially and academically. This in turn enhances their self-esteem and confidence.

Residential pupils feel safe and are treated fairly by staff. These sentiments are supported by comments made by their parents who also feel that staff look after their children well. They feel that the boarding experience helps their children to progress and develop. Residential staff also recognise residential pupils as individuals and are responsive to their individual needs.

The school operates a positive culture of consultation. Residential pupils are encouraged to contribute to decision making regarding developments to the school and the residential provision. The school council is well established and the pupils' contributions to this impacts positively on the overall provision. Residential staff also fully support and encourage residential pupils to make decisions on a daily basis. They are supported to express their views freely about any issues which are then listened to and acted on by staff.

Residential pupils benefit from a variety of experiences provided by the school. They produce regular articles to contribute to First News, a publication for schools across the county. They contribute to film reviews, they produce apple juice to sell to the local community and recently won an award for recycling. All these activities contribute to developing self esteem.

Residential pupils live in an environment where their physical, emotional and healthcare needs are well met.

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

The quality of care provided to residential pupils is outstanding. Residential pupils receive an excellent level of care and support. Excellent communication systems are

in place between residential and academic staff. These actively support residential pupils' personal and academic development.

The needs of residential pupils are fully assessed as part of the clear admission process. All residential pupils are provided with a care plan. This, together with a range of detailed documents, provides staff with clear guidance on how to meet the needs of residential pupils on a daily basis. Residential pupils are fully aware of the information which outlines their needs, strengths, targets and progress achieved. These documents are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect their changing needs. Residential pupils are fully encouraged and supported to contribute to their annual reviews as well as to attend.

Residential pupils fully take part in a range of recreational activities both within the school and in the wider community. Residential pupils are fully consulted in what activities they wish to take part in. Personal talents and interests are fully supported.

Residential pupils live in an environment where their physical, emotional and healthcare needs are well met. The parents of residential pupils maintain the primary responsibility in this area of practice. However, effective arrangements are in place for residential pupils to access the school's local surgery, if necessary. Residential pupils feel well cared for if unwell with suitable facilities and effective procedures being in place. Appropriate practices and arrangements are well established for the safe storage, receipt and administration of medication. The qualified nursing staff, in conjunction with the residential staff and specialist therapy support team, all work well together to promote the health, welfare and well-being of residential pupils. They provide young people with the necessary individual support to assist in developing their self-esteem as well as dealing with specific emotional and behaviour issues. Residential pupils are fully supported to take responsibility for their healthcare needs. This is achieved through the school's programme of personal social and health citizenship education as well as within the residential provision.

The school actively promotes healthy eating. Residential pupils are provided with a nutritious, varied and balanced diet. The religious, cultural and special diets of residential pupils are also well catered for. They are able to access drinks and snacks as well as a selection of fresh fruit on a daily basis. Opportunities are also available for them to be involved in various aspects of budgeting, shopping, preparing and the cooking of meals with the support of staff. Residential pupils are happy with the range, quality and quantity of food provided.

The residential provision is well maintained and provides sufficient facilities to meet the current individual and collective needs of the residential pupils. However, should the residential numbers increase the space in the communal lounges may not be sufficient. Residential pupils are provided with their own bedrooms which they are supported to personalise to their own tastes. They are provided with lockable facilities within their bedrooms to keep their belongings safe. Residential pupils expressed no concerns about the safety of their belongings.

Residential pupils contact with their families is positively promoted and supported. They have easy access to the school's landline telephones which they can use in private. However, residential pupils tend to have and use their own mobile telephones for this purpose. Residential pupils are also given assistance and training, where needed, to make use of modern technology to keep in touch with their families. Families are also welcome to visit their children at any time. Residential staff maintain strong links with the parents of residential pupils to ensure that they are kept informed of their ongoing well-being and progress.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes excellent provision to fully safeguard the welfare of residential pupils. The school has robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place and staff have received appropriate training. The school works effectively and collaboratively with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that any potential or safeguarding concerns are referred promptly to them. This practice ensures that residential pupils are protected from harm.

The school has effective procedures to protect residential pupils from bullying. An anti-bullying policy is well established for their protection. Residential pupils and their parents do not see bullying as an area of concern.

There have been no incidents where residential pupils have gone missing. However, the school would ensure that effective measures would be taken if this did occur. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that any incidents would be dealt with promptly to ensure pupils' safe return and they would receive a positive welcoming response.

Residential staff actively and effectively promote good behaviour. This is achieved through very positive relationships, encouragement and the reinforcement of positive praise. Proactive and positive strategies are also used on a daily basis as preventive measures to reduce the escalation of negative behaviours. Residential pupils are clear about the expectations placed on them by the school and conduct themselves in an exemplary way being polite and well mannered. The support they receive enables them to make significant progress in managing their behaviour both at the school and within their homes. Staff are suitably trained in the use of physical intervention. Sanctions and restraints are only used as a last resort in the management of behaviour. Comprehensive records are now maintained of all incidents.

The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that residential pupils and staff are kept safe from the risk of fire and other hazards in accordance with health and safety and fire legislation and guidance. Although currently, the bath taps are not fitted with safety mixer valves to ensure that the water temperature is safe. This is a high priority for the school and in the interim, effective measures are in place to ensure

the safety of residential pupils when using these facilities. Effective arrangements ensure that the various risk assessments, checks, tests and servicing arrangements are established and carried out at the required intervals. This ensures that the living environments for residential pupils and staff is safe.

Robust staff recruitment procedures and practices are maintained for the protection of residential pupils. New staff do not commence employment in the school until all the relevant checks are carried out.

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

There is a strong, sustained and effective leadership which ensures that the management of the residential provision is outstanding. Clear lines of accountability are established throughout the staffing structure of the school. The headteacher is supported by a strong management team who are well qualified and have considerable experience. Residential staff are very committed to providing the best level of care and support to residential pupils.

The aims for the residential provision are clearly set out in the school's Statement of Purpose and reflected in practice. The school's Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provides residential pupils and their parents with clear information. This describes the level of service residential pupils can expect to receive. The promotion of equality is well understood and practiced consistently within the residential provision. The diverse and complex needs of residential pupils are extremely well catered for.

The general routines of the residential provision are well managed. Good staffing levels are well established within the residential provision. These meet the individual and collective care needs of the residential pupils. Additional staff are deployed when day pupils are involved in the breakfast club and evening activities. Residential pupils are cared for by a stable and extremely experienced staff team. The school ensures that there are always suitably qualified staff on duty at all times.

Residential pupils are well looked after by a staff team who are trained and competent to meet their individual care needs. New staff are provided with a thorough induction programme when they commence employment. Residential staff are supported and encouraged to update their knowledge, skill and expertise by attending a range of courses. This includes both mandatory and more specialist training. Residential staff comment positively about training opportunities available to them. Most of the staff team have achieved the relevant qualification with the remaining staff working towards the qualification.

Residential staff are extremely positive about the support they receive from all levels within the school. Excellent communication systems are well established. These ensure that staff are kept up-to-date about the day-to-day operation of the residential provision and that residential pupils receive consistency of care. However,

staff have not received formal supervision for the last year. In addition, supervision records are also not being appropriately maintained in line with best practice. This means that the professional development and practices of residential staff are not being properly managed and adequately monitored. Annual appraisals have just commenced for this year.

The school maintains positive links with parents and provides them with information relating to their children. Parents feel that residential staff are accessible. Residential pupils and their parents know how to make a complaint. Most residential pupils state that there were a number of people they could go to if they had concerns and they are confident that the concerns would be acted upon. All complaints are responded to and addressed promptly.

Residential pupils' records are safely stored. The monitoring of all records is effective and undertaken both internally and independently. The maintenance of all records is comprehensive.

## **National minimum standards**

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

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

- ensure that all staff receive regular, individual supervision and that appropriate records are maintained of these.
- ensure that all bath facilities are provided with appropriate mixer valves to maintain appropriate water temperatures so that residential pupils can extend their independence in the use of these facilities.

**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.**



04/10/2011

Dear Residential Pupils

### **Inspection of Penn School**

As you know, Ofsted recently inspected where you stay at your school. I spoke to some of you about living at the school. Some of you also filled in questionnaires as did some of your parents. Your comments were very helpful to me. I have said in my report that the residential provision is outstanding. This means that the school is providing you with an excellent level of care.

I think that there is a good atmosphere in the residential provision and that you are very well looked after. You are happy living at the school and feel safe and well cared for. You feel that you get plenty to eat and like the meals provided. You all have individual rooms and your possessions are kept safe. You are provided with a range of activities which you can join in with after school. You enjoy the opportunities provided to you. I was pleased to hear how well you are all doing and the support you receive from the staff to achieve this.

The school ensures that you are kept safe and well. I found overall the school is managed very well but I have made some suggestions to improve further.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Webber