

Education and residential inspection summary for High Close School

Wiltshire Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1TS

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 September 2023

Outcome

The education overall effectiveness judgement is: Good

The judgement for the experiences and progress of children in the residential provision is: Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak highly of their education at High Close School. They feel accepted and cared for, and they thrive in this inclusive setting. Pupils who are new this term were seen to have settled quickly, and one told inspectors that they have already made new friends. Staff get to know pupils quickly and form strong and trusting relationships. This means that each pupil receives personalised support to help them to overcome any barriers to learning.

Expectations of behaviour are high. Well-established class routines help pupils to engage and focus on their learning. Adults take a consistent approach when providing additional support to pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. Pupils are actively involved in developing strategies to help them improve their self-regulation and understand their emotions.

Pupils are consistently encouraged to aim for success in their education. They understand that gaining qualifications is an important goal to work towards. This sense of purpose motivates them to persist in learning. While a range of study options are provided, leaders plan to develop this. They are keen to broaden pupils' aspirations for their post-16 education, training or employment.

The inspectors made two recommendations to help the school improve, covering governance and the curriculum offer for careers education.

What is it like to stay at this school?

Students who have recently started living in the residential provision have already started to make progress. Diligent planning has ensured that these children fitted into their residential unit seamlessly. They have developed good relationships with the children already living there and are learning to cook and improve their self-care skills.

Students who have accessed the residential provision for longer have made significant progress from their starting points as a result of the skills they have learned. For example, one child told the inspector: 'I will leave knowing I can live independently and go to college by myself.' One child has continued to live in a residential unit but attends the local college. Parents are consistently positive about the difference the school has made to their child's education and life. They say that there is an open approach, and that staff treat each child as an individual, which makes them feel safe. One parent stated that the school had 'saved their child's life'.

Residential students are listened to through a variety of ways. For example, they have been consulted on how they would like to refer to where they live and agreed on 'units' instead of 'homes'.

Key-work sessions, which are highly individualised, are valued by the residential students. They are used to check the child's understanding of information shared and support them to put into practice what they have learned. The continually evolving and developing independence programme means that residential students are not only learning how to manage the practical aspects of their lives once they reach adulthood, but also how to manage relationships and people who have different views and belief from them.

Children are educated and actively involved in learning about different cultures, identities, abilities, beliefs and celebrations. Students have recently set up a LGBTQ+ group. This gives residential students a forum to safely explore topics in a non-judgemental space.

There is a strong sense of community in which residential students share warm relationships, not only with each other but also with staff. Residential students often visit other units and spend time with their friends and play games. Residential students enjoy a wide range of activities. They have fun, make friends and enjoy trying out new things.

Staff are thoughtful in the way they help children move into the residential provision. They work closely with parents and other professionals to make sure that children's individual needs are fully understood. One parent said: 'They are working with me and [my child] so it is right for them; communication is great.'

Residential children are helped and guided to understand healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. They have bespoke packages and emotional well-being support from the therapy team. The integrated approach means that all staff who work with the children throughout the school know how best to support each child across the day.

The inspectors made two recommendations to help the school improve, covering governance and the way that children's plans are written.

- View the full inspection report for the education provision: [High Close School - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted](#).
- View the full inspection report for the residential provision: [High Close School - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted](#).



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