

Springfields Academy

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Anna Williams

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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.^{1,2}

Information about the school

The school received academy status in September 2011. This academy has a specialism in sports and provides residential accommodation for 70 pupils of both genders, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years.

This academy is for pupils experiencing difficulties in mainstream education as a result of a combination of emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties and complex needs. The academy also provides tuition in externally credited vocational areas for up to 500 students from 19 mainstream and special schools.

There are four residential units on the academy site. All residential pupils return home at weekends and during academy holidays.

The academy is situated in a rural town within 10 acres of gardens.

The academy's residential provision was last inspected in December 2010.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
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 the residential provision is outstanding.
- The academy provides an exceptional boarding experience for residential pupils who thrive on the innovative care and support they receive.
- Residential pupils benefit from warm relationships with committed members of staff who provide clear boundaries and a safe and stimulating environment.
- The provision for safeguarding residential pupils' welfare is outstanding.
- Residential pupils make extensive progress in relation to their starting points when joining the residential provision.
- Diversity and individual needs are fully recognised in planning and caring for residential pupils, and they are accorded equality of opportunity.
- Residential pupils have the choice of an extensive range of high quality activities which are offered to them locally, nationally and on an international basis.
- The accommodation and the facilities available are of an extremely high standard and provide an environment designed to meet the needs of and develop residential pupils.
- Residential pupils speak enthusiastically about the positive and significant progress they have made since boarding at the academy.
- Parents are delighted with the positive impact the residential experience has had on the lives of their children, themselves and their families.
- The residential provision is extremely well organised and managed.

- All national minimum standards are met.
- To further improve the academy is asked to review the storage capacity of its current medication cabinets.
- The academy has continued to maintain an excellent standard of care for residential pupils.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils within all the units enjoy positive relationships with each other, and a 'respect all' and 'help others' ethos is strongly evident. Residential pupils benefit from constructive and warm relationships with experienced and committed staff members. Staff work in partnership with pupils from their individual starting points, build upon their existing strengths and support them to develop new ones. Residential pupils develop emotional resilience and a more positive self-view because they receive highly effective emotional support and are actively engaged in exploring what holds them back from being confident in themselves. Residential pupils make extensive progress during their time as a weekly boarder. Comments from pupils include, 'the staff here really connect with pupils here', and, 'the school is brilliant, it has given the support I needed to get back on my feet'. Comments from parents include, 'this school has saved my child's life, my child loves to be at school now and loves to stay overnight here', and, 'my child has come along in leaps and bounds since attending'.

Residential pupils say overwhelmingly that they enjoy the boarding experience, and that they feel happy and secure within the units. Comments from pupils include, 'I like boarding, I've made lots of friends here, before at my other school, I felt really alone', and, 'I am really happy when I am in my unit'. Comments from parents include: 'My child is the happiest they have ever been, I cannot praise the school enough'. Residential pupils say that they like to take on additional responsibilities which are allocated within each residential provision. This means that pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to progress their personal and social development and build self-belief through these extra roles on offer in the units.

Residential pupils have made outstanding improvements to their behaviour through their residential experience. Comments from pupils include, 'staff here know me very well, they know if I'm getting anxious and always help me to calm', and, 'before I was really depressed and really anxious, now I am chilled'.

Residential pupils' feedback is sought through daily unit meetings, weekly individual tutorials, termly school council meetings and annual reviews. Through these different avenues of feedback pupils have seen changes happen in the decoration of the accommodation, in further activity opportunities and in menu planning. This means pupils can see that their feedback has a direct positive impact on their time in the units.

Residential pupils learn independent living skills through undertaking regular tasks around the units. Each unit has its own identity and specific goals and targets for residential pupils to work towards. Three units are progressive, which means when residential pupils achieve their goals in the admission unit they can then secure a place at the next unit which has additional responsibilities and a focus on supporting other peers in the group. The final progressive unit is based on independent living, where pupils cook simple meals, undertake their own laundry and can achieve further privileges. One unit is non-progressive and supports pupils with more complex needs, where pupils have individually tailored plans which focus on specific needs and targets. This means that all residential pupils are supported to develop relevant life skills and build confidence around daily living tasks, which helps prepare pupils for adulthood.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the academy's provision for residential pupils is outstanding. The accommodation is of an exceptionally high standard and provides a safe and secure environment. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements to the accommodation blocks such as new fitted kitchens, extensive redecoration, new electrics and environmentally friendly lighting installations and privacy screens throughout all the shared bedrooms. Comments from pupils include: 'I like the new bedroom screens, it means I now have my own space to relax in private.' Maintenance issues are addressed promptly so that all the accommodation presents as extremely well maintained. Each accommodation block allows residential pupils the choice to be alone or be part of a group and provides ample opportunities for further personal and social development.

Residential pupils receive substantial support to lead a healthy, active lifestyle. Parents and residential staff work effectively in partnership to promote the health of the pupils. The academy 'Well-Being Officer' leads on ensuring that the health needs of residential pupils are identified on admission, and are then detailed in an individual health care plan, which is reviewed regularly. While parents retain primary responsibility for meeting their child's routine health needs, the academy works successfully with local health professionals when necessary, to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of all residential pupils is being met. Residential pupils say they are well looked after if they feel ill when staying at the residential provision. This means that pupils' individual health needs are identified and met effectively. Arrangements for the administration of medication are safe and effective. However, the current medication cabinets have limited space within them to take any additional medications prescribed for new students or allow space for current pupils who may be prescribed further medicines.

Residential pupils overwhelmingly say that they enjoy the food. The quality of the academy's catering arrangements is excellent. The academy's central kitchen provides residential pupils with a varied and balanced diet and caters extremely well

for individual and specialist diets.

Residential pupils enjoy a comprehensive, high quality range of activities both on and off site. Daily 'enrichment' time allows residential pupils a wide choice of activities ranging from craft work, football or other sports, computer time, youth club, structured games, gardening, or 'chilling' time. Residential pupils talk enthusiastically about the range of activities which they take part in. Staff are imaginative in sourcing and training for off-site activities, which since the last inspection includes four residential pupils completing a trip to the Arctic. These achievements are celebrated and recorded in photos to share with all pupils around the academy and with parents. Comments from pupils include: 'I've tried loads of new activities since being here.' Comments from parents include: 'Through boarding my child can now access their peers socially unlike before.' The extensive range of activities on offer locally, nationally and globally for residential pupils means that pupils can experience different cultures, learn new skills and make new friends.

Residential pupils benefit from excellent pastoral support and guidance which is offered through dedicated residential tutors working one to one with pupils in order to reach individual goals and targets. Comments from pupils include, 'staff help me, slowly, step by step, to reach my goals', and, 'there's face-to-face support built in the school, you don't always notice it, but it's always there if you need it'. Academic staff and residential staff work cohesively to ensure that the 24-hour curriculum is delivered and is effective at improving pupil outcomes.

Residential pupils say they can contact their families and people who are significant to them in private. Parents confirm that contact arrangements are effective and they are kept well informed of their child's time at the residential provision.

Residential pupils' safety

The academy makes outstanding provision to safeguard residential pupils. The commitment and consistency of the management and the staff team enable them to work in partnership and maintain strong relationships with other professionals to ensure that they are proactive in providing child protection. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness of the safeguarding procedures and a thorough knowledge and understanding of these procedures in their day-to-day work. Staff actively encourage residential pupils to keep themselves safe when out in the community and when using the internet.

All residential staff have a strong, robust and proactive response to any incidence of bullying. Residential pupils confirm bullying is infrequent and if it does happen staff take immediate action to stop it. There have been no residential pupils reported as missing since the last inspection. The academy maintains a close positive relationship with the local police, and joint 'missing from school' protocols are in place and appropriate.

Staff are highly skilled in the promotion of good behaviour. The academy has a clear points system which offers residential pupils extra privileges through positive behaviour. The use of physical intervention within the residential provision is limited (seven entries in logs since March 2011), and when used is in accordance with the approved behaviour management method in which the staff are trained. The effectiveness of each incident of physical intervention is evaluated by senior management to look for patterns and trends and to learn from each individual event.

Health and safety within the accommodation units are exceptionally well promoted. The academy site has appropriate security, and access to the accommodation blocks is restricted through the use of effective security measures. Written risk assessments are in place for the whole of the academy premises, accommodation blocks, and all activities. These risk assessments are thorough and are used to support residential pupils to enjoy a wide range of activities, both on and off site, and to keep pupils safe when using the extensive academy facilities out of education hours. Residential pupils are protected by regular health and safety checks of the whole premises. Residential pupils confirm they know what to do in the event of a fire alarm or an emergency. Staff and pupils complete termly fire drills in residential time, which include a night-time evacuation.

There is a robust implementation of policies and procedures that relate to recruitment so that only those deemed suitable are appointed so as to safeguard the welfare of the residential pupils. Residential pupils say they enjoy being actively involved in interviewing prospective staff and giving feedback to the senior leadership team afterwards. This involves pupils in the important process of appointing new staff, and pupils feel that their views are fully considered.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of the residential provision are outstanding. Residential pupils are provided with written information about the academy which summarizes clearly the statement of the academy's purpose. Policies and procedures in place within the residential provision are understood and followed by residential staff. This leads to an environment for residential pupils which is ordered and safe.

Residential pupils enjoy the stability of efficiently run units with stable staff teams. Staff are sufficient in numbers, and hold, or are working towards gaining, appropriate childcare qualifications. Residential pupils benefit from a well-trained staff team and training is planned to meet the needs of individual pupils. Since the last inspection training has included behaviour management strategies, autism, and sexual health matters. This means residential pupils receive support from suitably knowledgeable staff.

The residential provision maintains a complaints log, although positively there have been no entries since the last inspection. Residential pupils say that they know how to complain and are confident that staff would respond promptly. Comments from

pupils include: 'I'd talk to any of the staff here if I was upset or worried.'

The academy senior leadership team make good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities relating to the quality of care provided and this drives forward improvement. There are regular monitoring visits and these include opportunities for pupils and staff to speak in private with the visitor. These monitoring reports highlight any areas of strength and weakness within the residential provision, and any feedback is acted upon promptly. Development plans for the residential provision are realistic and challenging and focus on improved outcomes for residential pupils.

The senior leadership team stimulates the enthusiasm of residential staff and channels their efforts effectively. Residential pupils are cared for by a staff team who are well supported through regular formal and informal supervision, a formal appraisal system and regular staff meetings. Staff have an excellent understanding of the importance of maintaining accurate and comprehensive records, and store them securely.

The senior leadership team models a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all residential pupils, including those relating to disability, ethnicity, faith, gender, language, religious belief, and sexual orientation. Individual residential pupil needs are recognised in care planning documents, and all residential pupils are accorded equality of opportunity. Comments from parents include, 'the whole attitude of the school is very positive', and, 'an all round excellent school'.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- review the storage capacity of current medication cabinets.

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.



04/11/2011

Dear pupil,

Inspection of Springfields Academy

I recently came to your academy to do an inspection of the care you receive when staying in the residential units. Thank you for letting me take part in some of your activities and for letting me eat some meals with you. I think that the academy gives you outstanding care and support in all the residential units.

You have an excellent range of activities which you can take part in both on site and off site, locally, nationally or internationally! You enjoy positive and warm relationships with members of the residential staff. You say that staff help you to reach your goals, and that you are praised when you reach them. You say that staff treat you as an individual, and staff know you well. You say that you like the accommodation and your bedroom space, and that there have been good improvements to the units over the past year. Staff make sure that you are safe and help you to learn how to stay safe when in the community or on the internet.

Thanks again for letting me spend some time with you. Overall, your academy's residential units are offering you outstanding support and care, and help you make lots of progress.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Williams