

Springfield House School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Martha Nethaway / Robin Whistlecraft

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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

Springfield House School is a Birmingham City Council Community Special School for pupils aged four to 11 with a range of special educational needs. The majority have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties; some have learning difficulties and some are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders. The school can accommodate 72 pupils and is open on weekdays and term time only.

The school is situated in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull and can accommodate children in the Lodge up to four nights a week. The residential provision can be a flexible arrangement based on an assessment of children's overall needs.

The purpose of Springfield House School is to provide a nurturing environment with firm boundaries in which children can rediscover their ability to learn and to enjoy and achieve.

The school was last inspected in March 2012.

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

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

Inspection judgements

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| 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 school is outstanding. At the last Ofsted inspection 08 March 2012 the service was judged to be outstanding overall. At this inspection they continue to be judged as outstanding overall.
- Learning to manage their social and behavioural difficulties is seen as equally important to academic success for the residential children. This is achieved through the successful partnership between residential staff, extended services and families. Collaboration and initiative working allows children to make outstanding progress.
- There are substantial strengths at the school which address residential children's additional needs. Children have direct access to speech and language therapy, music therapy and counselling. These therapeutic interventions help to raise the children's self-esteem and promote their ability to manage their behaviours effectively.
- Staff are dedicated, experienced and skilled and provide high quality care. Residential children's relationships are founded on respect and value is placed on individuality. Staff embrace equality and diversity in their daily practice. Children take part in a wide range of activities that celebrate culture and diversity.
- The safety and well-being of residential children is central to the work of the school. Staff adopt child-focused and child-centred approaches that support the holistic needs of the child. This encourages cooperation, the development of life skills and improves the child's capacity to interact more successfully with others. As a result, residential children feel safe, happy and empowered.
- Leadership and management are dynamic, highly accomplished and set high

ambitions. Outcomes for residential children and progress made are carefully tracked; their views and experiences are carefully considered. The governing body challenge and support in equal measure and regularly review the areas for development in the school.

- Families receive excellent communication from the residential provision. Contact is welcomed and supported. The designated home school liaison worker who collaborates with families is a key strength of the school's holistic approach.
- All of the national minimum standards are met.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential children are outstanding. They directly benefit from a highly inclusive residential community and experience positive outcomes. They develop close and exceptional working relationships with staff. Staff have high expectations of children and encourage them to achieve their personal best, fostering improved self-esteem, confidence and self-awareness. Children say that they really enjoy their stay at the school. Children thrive because they are provided with a nurturing environment with clear and structured boundaries. A key cornerstone of the work is to help equip a child with the skills to self-manage and interact with others at a successful level.

Residential children's welfare and well-being is especially well supported. They benefit from the targeted support from speech and language therapy, music therapy and counselling. Each child is regularly reviewed to track impact and progress being made.

Residential children are empowered and make outstanding progress to their behaviour. They develop self-respect, respect for others and are enabled to develop positive interpersonal relationships. For example, through activities, children learn peace-making skills and awareness through play. Most importantly, they are encouraged to develop strong skills in cooperation and conflict resolution. Over time, children are gaining self-control and this is contributing positively to their learning at school and to family life at home.

Residential children make an active contribution and learn about the environment and sustainability. For example, they regularly take part in enrichment activities such as forest fun, nature detective, cycling and walks. This results in keeping themselves fit and healthy. Another example, is once a week having an eco-day where the kitchen staff use one burner of the cooker for the school lunches. One child commented, 'today we had soup with bread rolls and the option of the salad bar and this is what we are doing to be more environmentally friendly.'

Residential children enjoy wide ranging activities to help improve their social skills and educational learning. For example, cooking, art and craft. One child commented,

'I love it when we play dodge ball, it is great fun and you get to hit the ball with some force.' As a result, the range of activities increases the children's social skills, leading to exceptional improvement in their behaviour, ability and education.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. Residential children are at the centre of staff practice. Pastoral care and support is undertaken by all staff at the school. Each child's personal, social, physical and emotional needs are successfully met by residential staff. Residential children's progress is strong. One member of staff commented, 'children taking part in the residential provision have consistently performed above the academic progress over the past three years.' This is underpinned by the successful observations and assessment to encourage children's development in all areas. For example, looking carefully at what is behind the behaviour from children. This makes an excellent contribution to a well-focused intervention plan.

Residential children participate in high quality afterschool activities and enrichment which supports positive learning and developmental outcomes. This results in supporting their learning and development across the day. This helps to continue to build on their knowledge, social and emotional skills and new experiences. Children say that their relationships improve with their friends. In addition, children's fitness and levels of engagement and activity leads to fostering improved health outcomes.

Care placement planning is well implemented to promote children's welfare, health and well-being. Placement plans are well focused to improve personal, physical and social skills through enhancing quality relationships and this is underpinned with definable targets. For example, residential children are responding very well to the best efforts by staff. They are relating better to other children and adults by becoming more cooperative and thoughtful. They are learning important skills to cope with frustration, worry and fear. As a result, this has a very positive impact on residential children's outcomes.

Residential children enjoy the facilities of the residential provision. A key strength of the facilities is the generous areas for children to play in and enjoy. One child commented, 'we get to have lots of fun using the forest, allotments and an area for training on our bicycles.'

The catering arrangements are excellent. All meals are freshly prepared and cooked on site every day. The school has attained the Healthy Schools Award, for being a healthy school. Residential children are encouraged to increase their up-take of healthy food options.

Residential pupils' safety

Residential children's safety is outstanding. Their safety is at the very heart of school life. This is underpinned by safe and effective staff recruitment. Children are empowered and enabled to feel and keep themselves safe. Children learn to improve their communication and problem solving skills. This helps to increase their self-esteem and confidence. This is achieved because of the successful adoption of the 'friends for life' programme. Children are working towards clear targets and some exercises are completed as home activities, such as, recognising feelings and involving residential staff. As a result, this helps to restore children's positive emotional well-being.

A key strength of the school is the planned approach to child protection and safeguarding. There is a high number of designated staff to deal with and implement safeguarding. This integrated approach works across the school and within the residential provision. In addition, there are regular welfare meetings which include input from the extended services such as the school nurse, integrated family services, counselling, speech and language therapy and music therapy. As a result, children's welfare and protection is very sharply focused.

Children's social, emotional and behaviour difficulties receive excellent support. Staff concentrate on the positive aspects of behaviour. For example, rewards and certificates recognise children's progress and achievement. Behaviour management plans set out the strategies and de-escalation techniques. Over time, children's behaviour significantly improves. However, the behaviour policy with specific reference to the recording and management of the calming down room is insufficiently detailed. The school has already identified this and is proactively reviewing this document.

Health and safety is robustly implemented. The safety of all children is closely monitored through using risk assessments which are regularly reviewed. As a result, excellent support is provided to children to develop their aptitudes, interests and independence.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The cohesion of team working is effectively implemented across the residential and teaching staff. They collaborate in order to create positive outcomes for children and they work very hard to achieve this. There is a genuine respect for the residential provision which is viewed as an integral part of school life. Residential children benefit because the residential experience is totally focused on development of self-help skills, social skills and the direct and indirect input from extended services. As a result, children thrive through their residential stays. One parent summed this up, 'they have helped my son with his social skills as well as academically. The staff

develop a really excellent rapport with families. It is really brilliant.'

Children are immersed in learning through activities and are learning how to be responsible. Their views are actively sought as a matter of routine during their stay. As a result, children learn about friendship, trust and camaraderie. Children are learning to cultivate self-discipline and independent thought. This results in children making excellent progress during their residential stays.

The management team has a very accurate evaluation of the school's performance and the barriers to success. The school's action plan is being successfully delivered and monitored by the senior management team. For example, training on protective behaviour, friendship for life and peace-making skills are having a very positive impact on children's outcomes.

Staffing arrangements are excellent which means residential children are provided with high quality care. Staff are well managed, supervised and supported. All the staff are professionally trained. Excellent arrangements are in place for key mandatory training. In addition, extra professional training such as emotional well-being, help staff to adopt best practice. For example, residential staff support children during their school day. As a result this ensures all staff are working closely together and achieving consistency with children's care and education.

Children's records and school policies are well completed and communicated. It encompasses a coordinated approach and takes full account of meeting the holistic needs of residential children. As a result, their care is being effectively provided for and correctly planned. Although an area for improvement is to ensure written entries are always specific in relation to behaviour leading to the measure of control. This is an administrative deficiency and does not detract from the excellent outcomes that residential children are achieving.

Families receive excellent communication from the residential provision. Contact is welcomed and supported through home and school diaries, telephone, home visits and meetings at school. A key strength of the school is the designated home school liaison worker who collaborates with families to help promote the welfare of residential children.

The school is well served by the governing body. They have an excellent insight and understanding of the school's strengths and area for development. They are very well aware of the quality of residential provision and the outcomes for residential children.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

- Review the behaviour policy with specific reference to the recording and management of the calming down room.
- Ensure that entries are always specific in relation to behaviour leading to the measure of control.

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.



12/11/2012

residential pupils

Inspection of Springfield House School

We visited the residential provision recently. We were really pleased to spend time with you and to hear and see how much you thoroughly enjoy your residential stays.

You told us that you are very well looked after and that you like all the staff that help you. We saw you enjoying a game of dodge ball which was brilliant.

You enjoy your time and like meeting up with your friends and getting to do fun things together. You behave well and are thoughtful to each other.

Thank you for letting us spend time with you and for talking to us about what it is like to live at the school.

Overall, Ofsted have judged the residential provision as outstanding.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Nethaway / Robin Whistlecraft