

# Springfield House School

Springfield House School, Kenilworth Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands, B93 0AJ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	09/12/2013 to 11/12/2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils experience great opportunities for enjoyment; they develop critical skills for life and have great fun doing a wide range of enriching activities. Parents give a high value to their children's time in residence.
- The school has a strong overarching, inter-agency approach to safeguarding. Staff are highly alert to early signs of concern and are extremely innovative in teaching children skills to keep themselves safe in relationships and behaviour.
- The school is inclusive and shares skills and resources in the best interests of children. The school takes a holistic approach to improving the quality of residential pupil's lives. Parents and associated professionals hold the school in very high regard and say that the school works excellently in partnership with them.
- Leadership is experienced, creative and inspiring, with a committed child focus. All staff working with residential pupils are highly competent and deliver consistent, skilled care. A cooperative, responsive team co-ordinates in-house therapeutic, educational health and social support exceptionally well.
- The school delivers outstanding practice in the majority of aspects; however, it has not maintained the overall outstanding judgement of previous years. There are two areas for further improvement: how the school evidences and reviews the efficacy of the calming down room and records of health and safety coordination.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of residential care practice over two evenings in the single residential unit; shared meals and informal discussions with children during activities; meetings and discussions with a range of residential, teaching and therapeutic staff and scrutiny of a wide range of documentation about residence. There was no Parent View information or responses to Ofsted's online surveys. However, the inspector spoke with many children in residence throughout the inspection and made telephone calls to parents, placing authorities and the statutory safeguarding authority to gather their views.

## Inspection team

Christy Wannop

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Springfield House School is a maintained school operated by Birmingham City Council. It is a residential Community Special School for boys and girls, aged 4 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 currently has 82 pupils and is open on weekdays and term time only. The school is in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull and can accommodate 10 children in The Lodge. There are two adjoining corridors that operate with separate small groups. The residential provision is a flexible 12-week arrangement for up to four nights a week. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2012 and education in March 2012.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to review the effectiveness of the calming down room within the whole school behavioural approach, particularly the records of the length of time of each use.
- Coordinate formal reporting, accountability and roles within the health and safety group.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Many ask enthusiastically to stay in residence because they see it as a great opportunity for them. Residence gives 'extraordinary' opportunities to have sleepovers, see friends after school and play out. They like the calm atmosphere and that they can read books in peace; it gives them the time to be creative in craft sessions, go on trips, go to the theatre, and do simple things like learning to ride bikes. These social relationships and ordinary aspects of childhood may have been difficult for them before.

The well-being of residential pupils is evident in their warm and affectionate relationships with staff. They have a say in residence: through regular children's meetings. Their participation in wider school democratic forums is shaped here and they make sensible suggestions about improvements. They want floodlights to be installed at the tennis court area; because they want more time to play out in darker months.

Staff give very careful thought to planning the best pattern of overnights and compatibility of residential groups for each residential pupil: this maximises friendship opportunities and safely minimises impact from clashes in personality. Individual differences in need, ethnicity and region or culture are respected. There are great celebrations of special days, where residential pupils anticipate and plan for their birthdays and festivals. Thoughtful activities in residence enhance academic achievement; opportunities for play extend their concentration and focus and enrich their social skills. Parents really value the change in their children's independent self-help skills. A parent described the difference for her child: 'getting better each day, comes back each day with something new.'

Residential pupils have ambition: one wrote that their time at the school has encouraged them to want to spend time in the future, 'inventing stuff and messing with gadgets'. They get valuable support to move successfully to the next stage of the school lives and this helps them to make the best transition possible. For example, staff work with parents on school selection and go with them to open days. They have even spent time in the first weeks of the term supporting pupils in their new schools. Residential pupils develop trust in the positive guidance that staff have given and move on, receptive to the support and guidance on offer in new schools because they have so benefitted from it here.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of residential provision is outstanding. The school is acutely aware that to help children to achieve in education, they must work with families and improve social and emotional well-being too. One parent said her child now, 'loves going to school, getting up, going there and being there'. There are excellent arrangements to support residential pupils' emotional, mental and physical health, thorough direct and project work with specialist child and adolescent mental health services. Medication and first aid is well managed. Children learn important messages about healthy living, 'eat fruit, do some exercise and eat veg.'

Welfare and pastoral support is seamlessly coordinated across education and care by a creatively resourced multi-agency, school-based team. Any staff can refer residential pupils for consideration at a monthly meeting, chaired by the senior residential leader. This meeting considers each child holistically and identifies, allocates and reviews a range of therapies and interventions to help children and their families. The therapeutic team also identify pupils who would benefit from a period in residence as well as supporting and building parents to advocate for their children. Residential pupils can also have sessions of music therapy, individual counselling, family support, speech and language therapy and nursing support.

Residential pupils have confidence that adults will treat them equally throughout the 24 hour curriculum, because residential staff also work in the classroom and give support throughout the school day. Good quality plans for residential care are drawn up with parents; the school also uses consistent behavioural support plans across the school. Communication between education and care, but also between staff and parents, the school and helping partners is a significant strength: the residential pupil is at the heart of a committed, skilled team. One parent described how staff built up a profile of her child. 'They have asked the right questions and I have given them the right answers', so she is confident in their knowledgeable care. There is no restriction on contact with families and residential pupils have a choice of telephones they can use to have private conversations home, despite being away from home for only a short period. They are excited to tell news about school.

The well laid out environment enables close staff supervision, but also plenty of space and safe levels of privacy for residential pupils of such a young age. The totally separate residential unit gives positive separation for residential pupils at the end of the school day. They can personalise the large, single bedrooms so they reflect their interests and they feel they have a place that is theirs. Staff organise residential pupils within the two separate wings of the unit according to gender, or to the best match of personalities, so that every child gets good levels of adult attention. A parent reported: 'Excellent service and care, seeing a big improvement on the residential side' for her child.

Food is good, plentiful, and catering arrangements and food hygiene are of the very highest standards. Mealtimes are social, well planned occasions which provide for good conversation, especially in the evenings. Residential pupils develop respectful good manners in an informal setting from staff who model patience and calmness. The school has a magnificent rural setting and extensive grounds. Residential pupils to let off steam and enjoy the countryside: they go out walking and make use of the Forest Fun area, for safe woodland play. They share after-school activities with day pupils. They can go horse riding, learn dance, do textile crafts, and the school makes links with the community through special events activities at a golf club and at local theatres. In formal reviews at school, residential pupils give very positive views about these activities, but for many, the most significant thing they enjoy is the chance to be with friends, build friendships and feel ordinary.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

**Good**

The safety of residential pupils is good. The school has a strong, overarching ethos that safeguards children at every level: in their behaviour and safe relationships with adults and their peers; in participation with statutory safeguarding partners; in excellent early identification of distress and in interventions to support parents struggling with positive parenting. Well-trained staff have an excellent grasp of their protective responsibilities. They act swiftly if pupils run off in the grounds or surrounding fields, in accordance with local interagency protocols for missing children. The local safeguarding manager has no concerns about how the school protects children.

Behaviour management strategies are good and incidents of residential pupils' out of control behaviour are far less frequent in residence than in school. Staff are trained to de-escalate challenging incidents. Physical intervention is not a regular occurrence: only minimal touch is used. Staff, very rarely, use a designated 'calming down room' when they cannot guarantee the safety of all using physical restraint or when such physical contact would further exacerbate the situation. Records of incidents show that in the vast majority of cases, residential pupils quickly regain control of their behaviour, calm quickly and move on to a discussion about putting things right after an outburst. While records report that the calming down room is used for only a short time and adults always stay with the child, the record does not show the actual period. The

behavioural policy now includes use of this intervention and the school is part of a relevant city-wide debate. Parents do say that their children's behaviour improves dramatically and describe they now have a degree of self-control that was unimaginable before.

The school environment and pupils' activities are safe. Staff with health and safety responsibilities across residence, grounds and school are trained and meet as a group, however, records of their meetings are not yet formalised. Standards of fire safety are good and the school is responsive through the risk assessment process to making improvements.

The school is highly creative and resourceful in how it promotes pupils' personal safety, using some specialist enrichment approaches that teach pupils the skills to protect themselves. This empowers pupils to be confident about how adults and their peers should behave towards them and gives them the emotional vocabulary to talk about feeling unsafe. This means staff quickly sort out incidents of bullying or risk, including e-safety or cyber bullying. Residential pupils are confident of their right to respect, regardless of their difference, whether that is a particular vulnerability, their gender, ethnicity or emergent sexual identity. The school gives a very clear message about this, in activities, in posters and in enrichment activities during and after the school day. Consequently residential pupils say they feel safe and trust the staff to take care of them. A parent was confident their child could, 'walk around the school and if he felt he couldn't cope with a situation then there'd always be someone he can ask for help.'

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

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher drives a 'can do' approach that marshals resources and encourages co-operative, interagency working to secure the best response for all pupils at the school. She has a background in leadership of residential education and committed to its fundamental role in children's success at the school. Records are accurate and confidentially stored. There have been no complaints because the school encourages parents to engage with them at every point. Partnership working is an outstanding feature at this school. One parent said the school had: 'made my life better and I know they have made my son's life better.'

There is a well-established cycle of formal planning and review in whole school governance; this incorporates a specific focus on residence. The headteacher had already identified the points for improvement at this inspection and has taken action about points raised at the last inspection and improved policy and records for behaviour management. The school is constantly seeking to maximise the positive impact on pupils. For example, an all-girls' group has been in residence for the first time in years, because staff identified their particular need for separateness. This has been a very successful arrangement and recognises girls' special needs in a school predominantly of boys.

The regular visits and reports of the school 'care' governor provide a challenge to the school to maintain this focus on outcomes for children. Her input has changed mealtimes that were too early. Now there is more time to play out before it gets dark and eat later. She wants even more homely touches in residential areas. Residential pupils have a good voice in the school: this is clear from the excellent quality of relationships. They give their views to formal meetings; have regular talks with their key staff; record their views after incidents, and set targets for their behaviour and skills. The school listens to them.

The confident, skilled staff team is long standing and enthusiastic about their work. They have good support from an experienced residential leader and a systematic process of reflective professional supervision and performance management. They provide good role models and ensure that the experience in residence is well planned, but not rigid. A local authority commissioning manager describe their approach as, 'Positive and enthusiastic, child-centred and

holistic'. The residential provision absolutely fulfils the aim of the school to provide a nurturing educational environment. They do well educationally, 'I did year six work when I was in year five.' Residential pupils clearly thrive there. Parents speak of the benefit to their children in getting sufficient sleep, better able to concentrate through the school day; they talk of the increased ability of children to share, cooperate with peers in social activities, and gain confidence. The school clearly makes a tremendous difference to children's lives.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103623
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC042411
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/7047

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Community Special
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	11
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	5 to 12
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Janet Collins
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	12/11/2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01564 772772
<b>Email address</b>	janet.collins@spfldhs.bham.sch.uk

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