

Mossbrook Primary School

Mossbrook Special School, Bochum Parkway, SHEFFIELD, S8 8JR

Inspection dates	07/10/2014 to 10/10/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The residence is run for the benefit of children. Staff provide a positive and nurturing service that ensures children maximise their opportunities to progress. Children gain considerably from levels of independent skills and communication that increases their participation in everyday interactions and activities.
- Children feel comfortable, safe and protected during their short stays. Staff communicate promptly and transparently with parents about their children, and this enhances their safety and wellbeing. Relationships between staff and children are excellent.
- Children contribute to the life of the home on many levels. Staff are responsive to their behaviour. They listen and respond to forum such as the children's council and individual consultations, to enhance the residential provision in line with children's wishes.
- The leadership team demonstrates significant and concerted commitment to improvement. High quality monitoring of the impact of the provision on children and their families provides a foundation from which they identify and address shortfalls. Consequently, children receive the best possible care from consistent staff.
- The school's leadership has made significant progress to address each of the areas of shortfall identified at the last inspection. Governors, the independent visitor and the head teacher regularly monitor and evaluate the residential provision within the context of whole school development. This includes working with the Fire Authority to identify and implement satisfactory interim measures that promote the safety of children despite delays to scheduled fire protection work.

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

Inspection team

Denise Jolly

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Mossbrook is maintained residential special school for up to 81 boys and girls aged 4-11 years. Around 15 pupils choose to stay one night a week at the residential accommodation, between Monday and Thursday. The residential provision is linked to the main school premises, and usually between four to five pupils stay on each night. The school is situated on the outskirts of Sheffield and caters for children with special educational needs, including communication difficulties and autism. It was last inspected in November 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- enhance further the training opportunities for care staff, with particular regard to behaviour management and speech and language skills
- enhance further the recording in care plans to ensure that independence targets are sufficiently broken down, and health action plans provide significant information in a way that helps staff to follow clear processes for emergency care
- ensure the fire safety work and internal environmental improvements are completed within the prescribed timescales, as set out by the Fire Authority.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Residential children are achieving good outcomes. Children enjoy harmonious and positive relationships with staff. They benefit from calm and consistent support that helps them to feel safe and valued. As far as they are able, children demonstrate positive relationships with each other because staff are skilful at supporting positive and inclusive play experiences. Children are enthusiastic about their short stay. They say, 'I like to stay with my friends,' and, 'staff are especially good at football.'

Children develop flexibility in managing their feelings and behaviour. This is because they acquire problem solving skills such as 'good listening' that helps them to take turns, and appreciate another's point of view. Additionally, they have lots of opportunity to practise social skills such as joining in with family style mealtimes, tidying away the plentiful toys, and learning to dress themselves. This improves their self-esteem, and increases their emotional resilience, to enable them to overcome barriers such as separation anxiety.

Children have a vibrant and active voice in the development of the residential service. They access a broad range of augmented communication systems to enable them to clarify their feelings and make choices. They use picture symbols to reinforce their choice of meal at tea and breakfast. During children's' council they talk together, using sign language, picture prompts and spoken word. They identify extra toys or equipment they would like, such as new dolls, dressing up clothes, or an electronic games console, confident that staff will respond to their views. They complete picture and word storyboard diaries to tell their families about what they have enjoyed during their stay. Importantly, they worked with staff to identify four simple rules that underpin their experience, such as being kind to one another, and looking after the toys. This ensures all children enjoy their stay in the residential provision.

Children have their health needs extremely well met in the residential provision, and receive respectful care that protects their dignity. They receive their medication in private. They have individualised support to improve their independence in intimate care routines. When they are unwell, they are cared for by concerned staff, who do their best to make them comfortable until their parents or carers collect them. Children also experience effective fundamental health care, such as a wide range of freshly cooked food, and plenty of opportunity to play outside in the fresh air. This ensures children are learning about how to stay healthy and happy in ways that are appropriate to their knowledge and understanding.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of residential provision and care is good. Staff offer children very good support and pastoral care. Academic and care staff work cooperatively to ensure there is seamless support for children. Residential staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to building positive relationships with children and their families. This is evident in the warm, affectionate, and playful support that staff provide to children, and the high degree of trust that parents voice about the service.

The senior residential childcare officer and headteacher take very seriously their responsibilities to ensure that the residential service offers the best possible experience for children, who have what they describe as 'sleepovers'. Recent initiatives include, for example, a settling review that uses the experience of the child, their family and the school, to assess whether the child is happy and benefitting from their place. This enables staff to make amendments to the original care plan to reflect the changing needs of children. Parents have found the induction procedure to be invaluable, because the proactive communication from staff reduces their anxiety about their

child's stay away from home. One parent said, 'The progress my son has made has been incredible, and it would not have been possible without the support of the school and the residential team.'

A strength of the provision is the plentiful toys and equipment that is available for children to use in a wide range of cosy and comfortable spaces distributed around the residential building. This prompts children to explore and experiment with new activities, as well as enjoy old favourites such as playing with construction bricks or playing electronic games. Staff skilfully extend children's imaginative play by encouraging children to dress up, or create stories from the dolls, adventure characters and soft toys that are readily available. This improves their social confidence and communication, because they experience successful interactions through their play. Some groups of children participate in activities in the community, such as going to the local park, or visiting a specialist sensory play area.

Staff prepare and review care plans for children that ensure all of their needs are identified and met. Children have their changing needs met well. Staff seek regular handovers between parents, academic staff and other professionals in order to possess all the information necessary, but do not consistently transfer it to the written record immediately. This does not affect children because staff use their considerable knowledge of children to interpret the plans, and provide care that meets their needs. Care plans differentiate the broad stages that children meet, to progress in their independence. Because staff rely on observation and experience to ensure that children are supported through the small steps that they take towards each stage, this introduces minor inconsistencies into their expectations about what children can achieve.

Staff are trained in the safe storage and administration of medication, and use effective and respectful procedures to ensure that children get the medication they need. Emergency support plans are in place when necessary, and are compiled in liaison with health professionals and parents. Staff are vigilant about the warning signs for children who may suffer from sudden deterioration in their health. This means that in crisis, children receive care in ways that are familiar to them, to aid their recovery and reduce impact of their ill health. Because food is freshly prepared and specific to the needs and wishes of children, specialist diets are provided in such a way that children do not feel different. For example, dairy free cheese and yoghurt is readily available so that all children share the same meal together in a family atmosphere.

The school's leadership has development plans in place for the redesign of the layout of the residential accommodation, such as providing more homely furniture for bedrooms, removing communal sinks, and putting doors onto the bedrooms to enhance privacy. There is plenty of space for children to learn, play and relax.

Residential pupils' safety

Adequate

Overall, the school has adequate arrangements for keeping residential children safe. The school operates safeguarding policies and procedures that are well embedded into staff knowledge and understanding, because staff participate in training and refresher briefings about their role in ensuring children are protected. This includes specialised training in safeguarding children with disabilities, and regular briefings about maintaining an environment that mitigates the risk of fire. Staff are confident to implement the school's child protection procedure, and liaise effectively with parents and health services should they be concerned about a child's vulnerability due to emotional or physical health.

The school gives children's safety a high priority. Staff work hard to help children to understand risks and how to stay safe. For example, staff help some children to understand the difference between familiar adults and strangers, while others are encouraged to think about how they can make other children happy. Staff are trained in, and understand the school's policy on E-safety.

To further enhance children's safety, the school has involved parents in learning about the dangers their children face, when using information and communication technology. The school completes routine and regular health and safety checks, including on electrical, gas and safety equipment. Any identified work is addressed promptly, to ensure the safety and welfare of children.

Children participate in half-termly fire drills, so that staff can observe their reaction to the fire alarm, and adjust their individual evacuation plan accordingly. The school's fire detection and alarm system is undergoing a complete re-installation. The agreed work schedule is now behind targeted completion dates. While the old system remains in use, it is not effective to protect the residence, and so the head teacher has worked with the Fire Authority, to upgrade environmental risk assessments, and provide additional temporary equipment and protocols to mitigate against the risk of the spread of fire. This means that the appropriate authority has agreed that due to the diligence and personal commitment of the head teacher, the systems are suitable for minimum protection until the delays in the work schedule are overcome.

Relationships between children are generally calm and friendly. Staff demonstrate expertise in helping children to consider the feelings of others, and have participated in training to help them counter bullying. Consequently, children and parents report that there is no bullying in the residential provision. Parents say that their children benefit from learning about how disputes can be resolved, and gain invaluable social interaction skills, by spending time with other children in a fair and equitable environment.

Staff consistently implement positive approaches to behaviour support, and use praise and redirection to encourage children to develop positive relationships. They do not restrain children. Not all staff have been trained in the school's chosen approach to behaviour management and this limits their knowledge and understanding to discuss the range of techniques available with academic staff. It has not detracted from the quality of safe and nurturing care provided to children.

Staff ensure that risk assessments identify the vulnerabilities of children with learning needs and autism. Emergency evacuation plans are individualised to each child, and the views of parents inform the strategies that are identified to reduce risk to them. Due to a combination of effective supervision, and strategies to minimise opportunity, no child has gone missing from the residential service.

The school operates safe and effective recruitment procedures that follow best practice. Staff are carefully chosen for their suitability to work with vulnerable children, by a panel that seeks to appoint adults who demonstrate a commitment to deliver safe and child-focused care.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The headteacher commenced his post in September 2013, and has made good progress to realise the strategic direction that he set out; that the residential provision is fully integrated into the whole school development plan. Since the last inspection, the school's leadership team has developed in-depth monitoring and evaluation systems that underpin a continually improving residential service.

The headteacher, alongside the senior residential childcare officer works diligently to address any shortfalls identified, and pursues excellence with vigour. This personal accountability is evident for example, in the collaborative work between the school and the Fire Authority, to ensure that there are sufficient and satisfactory measures in place to enable overnight stays to continue, despite delays in the contractor's work schedule for fire safety improvements.

Strong self-evaluation systems are in place. The impact of this is evident in improvements to the independent visitor role that includes half-termly visits and reports that add value to any assessment of the quality of residential provision. Equally, detailed and high quality action plans aspire to provide a safe and professional service to vulnerable children. Comprehensive reports from the headteacher to the governors' meeting offer honest reflections about how the residential provision makes a positive difference to children and their families. The annual review of progress provides an opportunity for the headteacher to celebrate the many successes the leadership team has worked hard to achieve, and identify challenges to overcome in the future.

A significant number of improvements arise from stakeholder comments and suggestions, such as creating raised vegetable beds, to help children understand the link between the food they eat and the pleasure of growing it, beautifully crafted photograph albums that are individually created for specific children, to help them talk to friends and family about their time away from home, and picture diaries that are used following consultation with speech and language professionals.

Other improvements arise from the leadership teams' determination to make the whole school accessible to families, such as coffee mornings, and the highly valued induction and settling in review process for children and parents new to the residential service. Care staff undergo a rigorous induction that enables the senior childcare officer to assess their strengths and development needs. Care staff are integrated into the whole school training programme where possible, for example, attending child protection training alongside academic staff, or being trained to use sign language. Access to some training opportunities has been limited, such as being able to participate in speech and language briefings. While this does not directly affect the care provided to children, it reduces opportunities for academic and residential staff to ensure consistent approaches to support them.

All required policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively so that residential children's health and welfare are protected and promoted.

The school has demonstrated capacity for improvement. It has successfully addressed all the shortfalls identified at the last inspection, as identified throughout this report. Notably, the safety of children is enhanced, and the quality of leadership has improved to create a positive impact on the development of the residential provision.

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

Unique reference number	107182
Social care unique reference number	SC003048
DfE registration number	373/7036

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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	15
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 11
Headteacher	Mr Dean Linkhorn
Date of previous boarding inspection	25/11/2013
Telephone number	0114 237 2768
Email address	enquiries@mossbrook.sheffield.sch.uk

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