

# Shenstone Lodge School

Shenstone Lodge School, Birmingham Road, Shenstone Wood End, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 0LB

## Inspection dates

08/12/2015 to 10/12/2015

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The quality of care and support

Good

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- Overall, children's experiences are positive and they make good progress from their starting points.
- The inclusive environment ensures all children are able to make their views, wishes and feelings known. They are listened to and reassured by the adults who look after them.
- Children engage in a wide range of socially and emotionally stimulating activities both on site and in the community. Children like the activities on offer and enjoy themselves.
- The quality of care provided is good. Children benefit socially and educationally from their residential experiences.
- Children feel safe and have some positive relationships with each other and staff who support them.
- Residential staff have a good understanding of children's vulnerabilities and difficulties.
- The school ensures children are fully involved in the daily routines and arrangements irrespective of their emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Leadership and management of the residential provision are strong and consistent.
- The compassionate and motivated staff work as a team and support each other well.
- Quality assurance and monitoring systems are good and centred around improving the experiences and outcomes for each child.

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

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Evidence who and when employment references were verified and the outcome of this check.
- Ensure the policy for the use of CCTV explains the reasons for its use, how children's privacy and dignity will be promoted and how often the use of this measure will be reviewed.
- Ensure that the school's programme of continuous professional development includes an annual appraisal for all residential staff.

## **Information about this inspection**

The inspection of residential and welfare arrangements took place following the appropriate notice period for this type of visit. One inspector carried out the visit and reviewed the policies, documentation, residential provision and organisation over a period of three days. The inspector spoke to key staff and managers, children and the designated officer for the local authority in which the school is situated. In addition, observations of residential routines and practices were made at different times of the day and evening as well as gaining feedback from some parents.

## **Inspection team**

Julian Mason

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Shenstone Lodge School is a maintained residential special school catering for boys and girls with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. It offers education for pupils aged 5 to 12 years. Currently there are 33 pupils on roll, of which 16 are residential pupils. Boarding is predominantly offered four nights a week. The residential provision is situated in a large country house and is spread over three floors set in a four and a half acre site. The building has been extended in the past to provide staff rooms, offices, a medical room and resource areas. The purpose built school is detached from the residential facilities. The residential provision at Shenstone Lodge was last inspected in March 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Children make good progress both socially and emotionally in comparison to their individual starting points. Their personal development and learning is central to the school's philosophy and ethos and this is carried out in practice. Promoting a community atmosphere in which everyone is respected and considered is clearly communicated and understood. Children's progress is tracked and monitored through an established assessment and evaluation programme. This informs residential staff about the areas of greatest need and helps to shape the direct work undertaken with each child.

Residential staff and teachers work together to ensure the school wide approach is inclusive and supportive. Parents and carers are positive about their child's residential experiences. They say, 'he loves it, the school is brilliant with feedback and all staff are very easy to speak to', and 'we are very happy with residential and all the positive experiences and activities she does.' Another parent states, 'I have no concerns about residential, he looks forward to going on Mondays.'

The residential provision is well managed and led by a newly recruited and committed head of care. The residential week is organised in a manner that promotes children's needs, safety and well-being. Children's views and ideas are actively sought through regular formal and informal communication. Consultation and listening to children are embedded into the daily routines and practices of the team. As a result, children with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties experience targeted support that they have helped to influence.

Children's needs in relation to their health and well-being are consistently met. Staff aim to maintain and improve health and fitness through the promotion of good diets and regular exercise. Staff mentor children in relation to healthy eating and fitness and try to encourage good habits that may benefit them in the future. Medication is safely administered and closely monitored to ensure prescribed medicines are given correctly. Policies and practice around the administration of medication have been reviewed and updated to ensure consistency with wider guidance and professional advice.

Children know that they can raise an issue or make suggestions because of the well-established 'speak up' arrangements that are used to record and act on feedback. Managers use the log to monitor responses and actions as well as the feedback given to children about the matters that they raise. Because of these practices, children feel listened to and know that they have a stake in how their residential stays are organised. Staff have good relationships with parents, carers and other professionals ensuring they keep everyone informed about individual circumstances and progress.

### The quality of care and support

Good

Staff work well together, which effectively meets the needs of all children staying in the school's residential provision. They are thorough in gathering information from parents and carers as well as from education, social work and health professionals prior to placement. Information is used effectively to provide the right support as well as matching children into the various groups over the four-night residential period.

Planning transitions this year has been more detailed and precise because of the introduction of a group of girls and an older year group of boys. This change is in line with the school's development plan, which is to offer a residential experience to a wider group of children. For

those that move on to their next educational placement, they are provided with tailored support that helps them prepare for change.

Children are treated with dignity and respect and their views, wishes and ideas are integral to their weekly plans. This helps to strengthen the focus on their personal goals and their participation in the forthcoming routines for the week. Children's confidence and self-esteem improves as they establish themselves within the school community and progress through the residential programme.

Children enjoy a range of stimulating activities, supplementing their educational timetable. They enjoy trips to the local library and community based clubs, use near-by recreational areas and parks as well as using the school's extensive range of on-site facilities. Children have the opportunity to try activities they may be unable to access at home and staff expectation is high in terms of their engagement and involvement. This ensures children are not disadvantaged and that any barriers to engaging in age-appropriate activities are addressed. Children enjoy their time in residential with some describing their stays as like having a 'sleep over' with friends.

Children experience residential accommodation that is clean, tidy and comfortable. Living areas have been personalised to promote a more homely atmosphere and to counter the dated layout of the building. Some parts of the accommodation have been upgraded and decorated such as bedrooms, bathrooms and communal areas. Because of these upgrades, the school is able to offer a greater number of single bedrooms. The accommodation is managed and maintained well despite the age and design of the building.

Children can and do keep in touch with people who are important to them during their residential stays. Arrangements for contact are well known and staff are mindful of the importance some children place on keeping in-touch with family. Staff are also very aware of those children who need extra support because they are struggling emotionally as a result of living away from home during the week.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions where everyone eats together. Staff act as good role models, helping children to behave and conduct themselves properly in this social situation. Children are involved in menu planning and they like to cook when they can. One of the most popular on-site activities is cooking and baking, children enjoy their time doing this. They benefit from the adult interaction and attention given to them, which is based around a popular and well-facilitated activity.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

Good

Children's behaviour, interactions and relationships with staff demonstrate that they feel comfortable and secure in their residential accommodation. Staff are acutely aware of each child's vulnerabilities and work proactively to ensure their safety. Staff benefit from experienced leadership and support which is underpinned by safeguarding and child protection briefings and training. Their practice is underpinned by key policies and procedures that are reviewed and kept up-to-date. Children feel safe and staff work in a way that promotes everyone's safety and welfare.

Any concerns or worries about a child's safety or well-being are reported to external agencies appropriately. Information is noted and gathered by residential staff which helps inform the school's safeguarding manager and lead agencies in determining appropriate actions where needed. No safeguarding or child protection matters have occurred at the school since the last inspection and no referrals to the local designated officer have been necessary. The school continues to have a good track record in working with partner agencies. In particular, where children have been assessed as being in need or their family are in receipt of early help from

children's services.

Children do not go missing from the residential provision or on outings because there is good staff planning and supervision. Staff know who they are responsible for both in the building and in the community. Arrangements and procedures are in place should an event of this nature occur and staff are aware of what to do in these circumstances. Managers are continually reviewing practices to ensure the right environment is maintained where children do not feel they need to behave in this way.

Overall, children enjoy sound relationships and generally interact positively or are appropriately guided and supported to improve their behaviour when necessary. Where incidents of bullying behaviour occur the residential team are quick to challenge and tackle these incidents. Children state that staff are fair and they know what is expected of them. When behavioural difficulties occur the team aim to deal with issues quickly to avoid escalation. Staff are trained in behaviour management practices including safe methods for physical restraint.

Detailed and frequent monitoring of how behaviour is managed is embedded into the management culture of the school. Managers use an online system where they can analyse and evaluate responses to difficult and risky behaviours. Through this system, they can identify any patterns or trends. This information contributes to the ongoing review of how staff are working with children who display challenging and difficult behaviours. For example, a recent steep increase in the use of physical intervention was identified, which corresponded to the start of a new academic year and the admission of new as well as older children. However, subsequent monitoring demonstrated a continuous decline in restraints as children were supported to use alternative ways of behaving that did not necessitate physical holds. Staff are continually working to help children take control of their own behaviour and reduce risks to themselves and others.

Children's health and safety is promoted well. The implementation of a range of risk assessments that relate to the school building, external grounds as well as on and off site activities help to keep everyone safe. Regular checks of fire prevention systems, electrical, water and gas installations further ensure the school is a safe place to be. Maintenance and upgrading the school's facilities is prioritised and matched to the needs of children. For example, additions to the fire alarm system and strengthening perimeter fencing have been undertaken to improve safety. Newly installed CCTV has also been completed. However, the policy around the use of electronic surveillance is not clear. It does not explain the reasons for its continued use, how children's privacy and dignity will be promoted or how often the use of this measure will be reviewed.

Recruitment procedures include a range of pre-employment checks including criminal record vetting that is renewed every three years are undertaken before a person starts work. Necessary employment references are obtained and verified but evidence of who and when this is done are lacking. This is an administrative shortfall and overall the school ensures staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

Good

The residential provision is well managed by a new but experienced head of care who has many years' experience and is suitably qualified. She is supported by a diverse and mixed team of new and long serving staff. The head of care is part of the school's senior leadership team and is directly supervised and supported by the head of school. From leaders at the top to the residential team there are high aspirations for the children in their care. They work hard to enable children to fully benefit from the opportunities offered throughout the school day and their residential stays.

One young person saying about his school work, 'they want you to do well, they are always pushing me to get my levels up.'

The statement of principles and purpose of the residential provision are clear and staff and parents understand the role of residential in improving children's outcomes. The head of care and staff team cultivate practical and open working relationships with parents, carers, education staff, social workers and health professionals. Staffing levels reflect the range of needs and numbers being accommodated. The team are supportive of each other and they reflect a nurturing and patient approach to care that is expected from them.

Staff benefit from regular supervision and say they feel well supported along with being able to approach managers with any concerns they may have. Weekly team meetings, which have just been extended keep residential staff up to date with developments in children's lives and their current learning goals and targets. Staff have access to a varied range of training and development opportunities that is also linked to the school's overall development and improvement agenda. Training and development needs are identified through an agreed programme of continuous professional development. However, this is not yet fully linked to a formal system of annual appraisal for the residential team.

Managers have a good insight into how well children are being looked after. They continue to improve and develop the service as outlined in the school wide development plan. The head of care has strengthened the quality assurance and monitoring activities and now carries out more surveys, seeking feedback from children, parents and staff around a host of operational matters. Regular monitoring on behalf of governors is increasingly robust and much more critical and evaluative since the last inspection. Many changes, developments and improvements have taken place because of the school's drive to improve further. These arrangements are helping to maintain what has already been achieved as well as mapping out where managers need to focus their attention.



## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104024
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038726
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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 Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	16
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	7 to 12
<b>Headteacher</b>	
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	05/03/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 480369
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@shenstonelodge.sandwell.sch.uk

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