

# Fred Nicholson School

Fred Nicholson School, Westfield Road, DEREHAM, Norfolk, NR19 1JB

## Inspection dates

12/01/2016 to 14/01/2016

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

**Good** **2**

The quality of care and support

**Good** **2**

How well children and young people are protected

**Requires improvement** **3**

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

**Good** **2**

## Summary of key findings

- Young people make good progress because of their residential experiences. Staff and managers follow robust procedures, which identify young people's goals and match these with suitable strategies to support progression.
- A well-established staff group are familiar with young people's emotional and developmental milestones. They have excellent relationships with them and prioritise safety and welfare through specially adapted safeguarding programmes. Young people's self-esteem improves as they learn to assert themselves.
- Young people attain increased levels of independence. Staff view every activity, such as playing team games on site or going out into the community, as a learning opportunity. Young people acquire skills that will support them as they grow into adulthood.
- Young people develop courtesy and respect for each other. They understand expectations and behave positively.
- Parents speak very highly of the achievements of young people. They have great respect for the commitment shown by staff. Parents feel that they are part of the team; staff respect and respond to their opinions and views.
- Some shortfalls against the national minimum standards have been identified during the inspection. Safety checks on adults living on school premises and agreements covering their conduct while on site have not been completed.
- Other points for improvement include; recording on case files, ensuring that

independent monitoring is rigorous and comprehensive, clearly recording the learning and development programmes and ensuring the annual review of compliance with the national minimum standards sets out actions required to develop the residential provision.

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

**The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.**

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

Ensure that all persons over 16(not on roll of the school) who after April 2002 began to live on the premises as children but are not employed by the school, an enhanced certificate with a barred list of information must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). (National Minimum Standard 14.1)

Ensure that there is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, member of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with children, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with children. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence. (National Minimum Standard 14.2)

#### **Points for Improvement**

Ensure that recording on case files is complete and up to date so that progress made by young people can be tracked and any concerns followed up.

Present the annual report on the compliance with standards and review of the quality of care in a formalised manner, with detail of the actions required to further develop the residential provision.

Ensure that the learning and development programme is clearly set out and details the identified training needs of staff, in line with the emerging needs of the young people.

Ensure that independent monitoring is rigorous, gives comprehensive evaluation of the residential provision, including the impact on residential pupils, and generates actions to support further improvement and development.

## Information about this inspection

The inspection took place within three hours of announcement. Inspection activity included talking with residential pupils and joining them for mealtimes, a tour of the accommodation, observation of staff handover meetings and scrutiny of case files and policies. In addition, there were discussions with key staff, external professionals and parents. There were five responses recorded on Parent View.

## Inspection team

Fiona Littlefield

Lead social care inspector

Louisa Bayley

Social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Fred Nicholson School is a day and residential special school maintained by Norfolk County Council, catering for pupils with complex needs aged from 7 to 16 years. Situated in a residential area on the edge of the market town of East Dereham, the school takes pupils from a wide catchment area. The residential provision is situated in the main school building and provides separate accommodation for boys and girls. This is split into dormitories of four or less and a flat, which allows for individual bedrooms for the older residential pupils. There are currently 130 day pupils, of which 24 are residential pupils. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2014.

## Inspection Judgements

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

**Good**

Young people make good progress in learning to live harmoniously with those around them. They learn to work together and are encouraged to develop friendships. They show respect for one another, acknowledge achievements and celebrate special milestones, such as birthdays. Consequently, the atmosphere is settled and calm.

Young people learn to work together. They work as a group in various activities, such as detective nights, play team games or work on crafts or sports together. They sit together at mealtimes, where their interaction is relaxed and informal. Staff supervise this skilfully; ensuring young people are courteous to each other. As a result, young people know what is expected of them.

Young people make progress because staff and managers work with parents to identify goals and the best approach, which helps individuals to achieve success. These bespoke packages are reviewed formally as part of the young person's overall progress in the school. Parents notice positive changes and improved confidence. One parent said: 'She has come out of her shell. Once they asked if she could swap nights, they told her that it would help someone else so it immediately made her feel good. They are very skilled that way.'

Staff and managers are committed to ensuring that the views of young people are taken into account. Lively and confident relationships with staff have helped young people express their views. They know that they are taken seriously and can affect change.

Staff are highly ambitious for young people, wanting them to be as prepared and confident as possible when they begin adult life. School and care staff work closely with them and their families to develop a plan that reflects their individual needs, disabilities and talents. The head of care said: 'We work with young people so they understand that they have to work to achieve their goals. We help them cope with disappointment but we know them really well and this means we can build their confidence.' Young people benefit from this realistic but sensitive approach.

Overall, the staff work hard to promote young people's understanding of keeping themselves safe. Despite specific, isolated shortfalls around processes identified in relation to adults living on site, safeguarding young people is fundamental to the ethos and culture of the school.

Leaders and managers are young person focused; they have developed an established and cohesive staff team who ably support each individual.

Young people make progress because they benefit from being cared for by staff who are familiar to them and responsive to their needs. Care staff work closely with parents to build up a picture of a young person's personality, behaviours and any risks. A period of extended tea time visits helps young people settle into routines. This can take time but staff and managers are patient and positive. The parent of one young person said: 'We were very happy with the introductory process and she was very excited but at the last moment she panicked. Staff didn't push it, she was reassured and we are trying again.' Consequently, young people and their families gain confidence.

Staff work together across the school to address challenging issues and develop a consistent and shared approach. Residential staff meet daily to review care plans for individual young people coming that evening. They use the opportunity to review any recent developments that teaching staff may bring to their attention. Staff are empathetic and understand that a young person's behaviour may reflect anxiety and low self-esteem. For instance, a young person who had been experiencing anger management problems during the day had extra time with her key worker, who was able to support and reassure her. In addition, staff can consult a therapist, acting as part of the care team, for advice. Young people learn to manage their behaviour and their self-esteem improves because of this finely tuned response.

Staff and managers are committed to helping young people develop skills that they will need as adults, they take every opportunity to enhance individual's learning. They encourage them to take responsibility for their personal routines so they become increasingly independent.

Residential and catering staff work together closely to provide well-balanced and attractive meals and encourage young people to try different foods. Staff are skilled in helping young people enjoy meal times as occasions for social interaction. Young people are polite but exuberant; when they go into the community they are confident about how to behave. On one occasion, the manager of a local restaurant phoned the school to compliment them on the outstanding behaviour of a group of young people who had eaten there.

Staff and managers are imaginative in planning a range of activities both in the school grounds and outside, which young people enjoy but which also consolidates their learning. For instance, some young people say that their favourite activity is helping staff in the tuck shop to dispense snacks. This helps their numeracy skills, confidence in handling money and thinking about healthy foods. Staff support young people with reading, which is a fundamental part of the residential routine. In the community, young people have access to sports, such as bowling, ice skating and swimming. Staff work with some young people to prepare them to access the local community and use public transport. These careful approaches mean that young people learn to be more self-reliant.

Parents are very complimentary about the impact of the staff on young people, progress that they make and their commitment to working with families. The parent of one young person said: 'I have nothing but compliments. Staff have been so good to him and the rest of us. He used to be so introverted. Now he is full of chat, excited and confident.'

## How well children and young people are protected

### Requires improvement

The judgement of requires improvement reflects that the school has failed to meet two of the national minimum standards. Arrangements to ensure safety checks on all adults living on the school premises have not been followed. These checks are designed to ensure that all adults living on site do not pose a risk to young people. This is an isolated case, which the staff began taking action to address once it was raised during inspection. Staff recruitment procedures are robust and effective.

Young people are safe and confirm that they feel secure. If they want to make a complaint or if they are concerned about anything, they are clear that they would talk to their key workers. One young person said: 'Of course, you can talk to any member of staff here if you are worried.'

Staff across the school receive regular safeguarding training and work as a team to promote the message that all young people have the right to feel protected. They have worked together to develop a range of programmes that meet the specific needs of the young people and keep them safe. The focus is to equip young people with a language that helps them express their emotions and take assertive action if they feel confused or bullied.

Keeping safe is central to the ethos of the school and staff are sensitive to the possibility of internet abuse. They have approached this creatively, using drama to encourage young people to share information with responsible adults. The time young people spend in the residential provision seen as an added opportunity to reinforce this message, through the positive relationships that young people have with staff. Consequently, they feel more in control and are learning to protect themselves

Young people are supervised closely; however, their behaviour may cause concern from time to time. On these occasions, staff and managers work closely with them and their families to take immediate action to manage risk in a positive way. As a result, all young people remain safe.

Staff promote positive behaviour through consistently applying routines and boundaries and positive role modelling. Young people are taught that safety is everyone's concern, from basic awareness on roads and car parks to not carrying hot liquids in the canteen. Staff encourage young people to take appropriate risks, including working with machinery, cycling and using mopeds, but every activity is carefully assessed. One member of staff said: 'There is a big safety angle. I teach them routines so I know that they are ready and calm before they start. We repeat this all the time, just like the fire drill.' This means that young people develop habits that will help keep them protected as they grow up.

Staff across the school are proactive in ensuring that incidents of negative behaviour in residence are extremely rare. Residential and academic staff work together to provide a seamless transition between school and residence and support all aspects of individual development. For instance, when care staff collect young people at the end of the day,

they use the opportunity to catch up on any late developments. This means that nothing important is missed. Young people are aware of this and it helps them to feel secure.

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

The residential provision benefits from a long standing, well established staff team. The managers are qualified and well trained and there are sound arrangements for deputising in the absence of the head of care and other senior staff. Young people benefit from this comprehensive approach to their care.

The head of care reviews placement plans on a termly basis and the staffing policy and statement of purpose are reviewed on an annual basis. She also reviews the school's compliance with the national minimum standards. Currently, this informal process lacks clear recording. This does not enable good preparation for succession planning and does not promote and stimulate on-going improvement.

The team of care staff are made up of long-standing established staff who work the same hours each week. Contingencies are covered by using the existing staff team and drawing on school staff where needed. Managers prioritise the professional development of staff, most of whom are qualified to national vocational qualification level three. Staff say that they feel exceptionally well supported and that they are well equipped to effectively care for young people. A point for improvement is to ensure that the learning and development programme clearly identifies training requirements and plans, based on young people's emerging needs.

The deployment of staff considers the needs of the young people, gender mix, and group dynamics. This enables safe oversight of residential pupils who benefit from a range of adult role models. Feedback from parents is positive. One parent said: 'I was very apprehensive at first but she is learning to be independent. Communication is fantastic. If they want to raise something, they keep trying until they get hold of me. They never let something drift.'

The school generally maintains the required policies. Independent visits take place, alternating between a representative from the local authority and a governor. The reports meet the required standards but offer little or no evaluation of the quality of provision. There is no detail about the progress of residential pupils and no record of the impact of the residential experience. The reporting does not provide the rigorous challenge required to stimulate ongoing improvement.



## 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>	121256
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038284
<b>DfE registration number</b>	926/7004

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>	24
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11-16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alison Kahn
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	11/12/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01362 693915
<b>Email address</b>	office@frednicholson.norfolk.sch.uk

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