

# Oakfield School

Hopewell Road, Hull, HU9 4HD

## Inspection dates

08/02/2016 to 10/02/2016

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

**Good** **2**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

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

### The residential provision is good because:

- The quality of support and care for young people is excellent. The staff provide care that is highly individualised to the specific needs of each young person. The views of young people are an integral part of the organisation of the residential provision. As a result they feel involved and respected for their views and this raises their self-esteem.
- The purpose-built residential accommodation is superb. Young people each have their own single ensuite bedroom. Other facilities are also of a high order. This was summed up by one young person as 'like a home from home.'
- The arrangements to safeguard the welfare of young people are mostly sound. They feel safe and there are no concerns about bullying.
- Sometimes young people leave the premises without permission. A national minimum standard is unmet because the school's policy on missing persons does not reflect government statutory guidance or that of the local authority. Consistency is important due to risks young people may face by going absent.
- There are other shortfalls relating to safety. The fire risk assessment has not been reviewed since 2013. Advice from fire prevention experts is that this should be annual. The recording of restraints does not provide sufficient accountability as it relies on the use of technical jargon to explain how the restraint was conducted.
- The senior leadership team are passionate in their aim to provide the highest quality of care. They have developed robust arrangements for quality assurance including seeking the views of young people; sending questionnaires to parents and professionals; self-evaluation against the Ofsted inspection criteria and regular monitoring and reporting by experienced, independent experts. Half termly monitoring reports are not fully informative about restraints and young

people who go missing from the residential provision.

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

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools:

- 15.6 The school's procedures are compatible with the local runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the head of care (or school equivalent) follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority.

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

- Where technical jargon is used to describe holds used in restraint records, add an explanation to clarify what the terminology means.
- Seek and respond to experts' advice about how often the residential provision fire risk assessment should be reviewed.
- Conduct separate analyses of restraints and young people who go missing in school time and residential time in the independent visitor's half-termly monitoring.

## Information about this inspection

Ofsted gave the school one hour's notice of the inspection of its residential provision. Evidence came from one-to-one and group discussions with residential pupils; discussions with parents of five young people; analysis of written surveys from 22 residential pupils, 4 parents of residential pupils and 32 residential staff; one-to-one discussions with residential staff, the headteacher and the head of care; discussion with the governor responsible for residential care; assessment of the school's policies, records and young people's case files; a tour of the residential houses and observations of residential routines.

## Inspection team

Steve Pearson

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Oakfield School is a maintained residential special school for 80 boys and girls aged 11-16 years, 35 of whom reside at the school during the week in term-time. Residential accommodation is provided in six houses on the school site. Five houses each accommodate six pupils in single, ensuite bedrooms. A sixth house is designed for four pupils with physical disabilities. The school is situated in Hull and caters for pupils with emotional, social and mental health difficulties. The school's residential provision was last inspected on 23 June 2014. At the current inspection there were 24 young people resident.

## Inspection Judgements

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

**Good**

As a result of the quality of care provided, young people make excellent progress across a range of areas including academic attendance and achievement, social, personal and emotional development. Parents and young people gave abundant examples of how residential care has had a dramatically positive effect on development. For example, one young person said, 'I used to be shy before I started to stay in residence. Now I ask for help so I'm doing better in school.' And a parent said, 'My son has a lot more confidence now. His behaviour is much better and his temper is a lot better.'

Young people gain social skills from mixing with other children in the houses. They also meet other young people in the community for example, at cadet meetings. Several parents commented about how their child had benefited from having friendships with other young people in the residential houses.

Young people's behaviour is good. The inspector observed their interactions with each other. They are considerate and have good manners. Young people get on well with each other and with the staff. One young person summed this up saying, 'I like coming to stay in the house. We get on with each other and with the staff. We argue sometimes but there isn't any bullying.'

Staff have a real commitment to ensuring the views of the young people are represented in the running of the residential houses. For example, young people are invited to attend regular house meetings and the staff fully involve them in major decisions about the leisure activity programme and décor of each house.

The head of care and team of staff are all clear about the purposes of residential care. A primary aim is to help young people become confident and self-reliant in preparation for adulthood. Consequently young people of all ages are involved in an independence programme to help them gain relevant knowledge and skills for the future. Independence plans are thoroughly researched and well-structured. They provide a focus of activity for each young person. Targets are set with each young person and their parent or carer. The staff then help them to focus on the targets to help them make real progress over time. A parent summed this up saying, 'My son is now more confident. He's better at looking after himself. It's made a world of difference for him.'

The staff all have thorough training in child protection issues. They clearly understand each young person's safeguarding needs and how to meet them.

The head of care leads and manages the residential provision very effectively. He is passionate about providing the highest quality of care and is effective in motivating the staff by his enthusiasm. Robust quality monitoring systems are in place to help continuous improvement in the quality of care provided.

### The quality of care and support

**Outstanding**

The needs of young people and how these are to be met on a day-to-day basis are comprehensively assessed and recorded clearly and accurately in individualised care plans. These are kept up to date by each child's key worker who maintains an overarching responsibility for their progress within the residential setting. Young people and their parents and carers are fully involved in the initial assessment of needs and in deciding what targets are to be met during the residential term. These are monitored carefully throughout the term to make sure of continuous progress.

The quality of the residential premises is superb. Each young person has a single, ensuite bedroom. One young person proudly said, 'I love my bedroom. It's my own space and I can put up my posters and pictures. We are each given £30 to decide how we want our rooms to look.' Each house is clean, tidy, and well-maintained. Another young person said, 'It's like a home from home.'

The staff carefully plan and evaluate leisure activities to achieve best outcomes. Consequently, young people make significant progress in their physical, emotional and social development.

Within each house there is an excellent range of stimulating leisure pursuits including board games, books, musical instruments and laptops. The staff encourage board games and other interactive leisure activities because of the social benefits gained. Such benefits also arise from a carefully considered range of external activities. These include membership of army cadets, swimming, walks in the local area and outdoor camps. Young people gain leadership and organisational skills by being encouraged to organise and lead some activities. One young person summed this up saying, 'I love staying in the residence. I like the activities because they are fun and we do all sorts of different things.'

Arrangements for promoting young people's health are robust. The staff help young people be physically healthy by encouraging them to take part in activities which involve exercise and movement. One of the house managers carefully coordinates the menus and meal arrangements to ensure diets are nutritious and tasty. The staff regularly hold culture nights at which they prepare foods reflecting those eaten by people from other countries. One young person said, 'I like the food. We get plenty and it's all homemade.' The school has developed an emotional well-being team who provide young people with effective support to gain mental health.

The team of staff provide an excellent quality of care. This has a dramatic effect on young people's progress. Young people feel settled and secure by consistency of staffing, clear boundaries and well-developed relationships with the adults around them. A young person said, 'The staff care and respect us.' Parents were unanimous in their praise of the care provided. For example, one parent said, 'The residential care has been the making of my son. It's the best thing that could have happened to him. He's happy, his behaviour has settled down massively and he's more confident.' Another parent said, 'I can't praise the staff highly enough. I don't know what we'd have done if our son hadn't come here.'

The staff fully include young people in how the residential houses are run and organised. Young people are represented on the residence council meetings, and each house holds regular house meetings. These are effective in reflecting the wishes of children. For

example, one young person said, 'We have house meetings where we say what we think and if possible the staff will sort things for us. We said we would like rugby posts on the school fields and we said what flowers we wanted in the garden. And the staff sorted them both for us.' Consequently young people feel included, empowered and valued.

Young people can contact their families at any reasonable time. Each house has a cordless phone which they can use in privacy to ring home. Families said they can also ring their child at any time and the staff keep in close contact with them. This helps young people feel reassured where necessary and means care needs are well met. One parent summed this up saying, 'We can ring our son any time and he can ring us. We also discuss their behaviour with the staff and we share tips about how to help him behave better. It works well.'

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

### **Requires improvement**

Arrangements for ensuring young people are safe and protected from harm are generally sound. Some aspects of safeguarding practice are not yet sufficiently robust.

Sometimes young people go missing without permission. The staff search for them and notify the police appropriately. The school is failing to meet a national minimum standard because its procedures about missing children do not reflect government statutory guidance or guidance set by the local authority. For example, school procedures do not offer the opportunity of a discussion with an independent person on their return. This is important as young people may feel safer discussing issues with someone who is not associated with the school. The school's written procedures also do not make clear the difference between whether a young person who goes off site may be deemed to be 'missing' (high risk) or 'unauthorised absence' (low risk). Given the dangers young people may experience when they are unsupervised and their whereabouts unknown, it is important that school procedures are consistent with those set by the government and local authority.

Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Young people take part in regular fire drills and are aware of how to respond safely. The risks from fire in the residential houses has not been formally reviewed since 2013. Good practice would suggest this should be done annually. The senior leadership team has attempted to address this with those responsible but to date the assessment has not been updated. Although no fire risks are apparent, given that this is a residential setting it is important to review the fire risk assessment regularly.

Sometimes the staff physically intervene and restrain young people to protect their welfare. This is done safely and for appropriate reasons. For example, one young person said, 'The staff do have to restrain us sometimes. I've been restrained but it was ok, I was ok about it. Staff only restrain you if you're going to harm someone.' There is insufficient detail about how restraints are conducted. This is because the staff rely on technical jargon (for example, a 'full shield' or a 'figure of four hold') to record how a restraint was conducted. Without extra explanation in the records, external people and young people who may read the accounts in the future may not understand the terms

used.

Strong arrangements are in place regarding child protection. The school's policies and procedures on these issues are up-to-date and reviewed regularly. They reflect statutory guidance set by the government. The school has a designated lead person who effectively coordinates and communicates effectively with professionals in external child protection agencies. This person coordinates training in child protection and ensures the staff are up-to-date and knowledgeable about statutory guidance set by the government.

Effective measures protect young people from harm, abuse, exploitation and accident. There are no concerns about bullying and if this does arise, the staff respond to it quickly and effectively. Young people spoken with at the inspection all said they felt safe and said bullying is not a problem. One young person summed this up saying, 'Sometimes bullying does happen. If it does the staff sort it out quickly and it doesn't happen again.'

The head of care and staff team set clear and consistent boundaries for behaviour. This helps young people feel settled and secure. Parents were praiseworthy of how the behaviour of their children had improved over time. For example, one parent said, 'My son's behaviour is much better now. He's much more settled.' And a young person said, 'If we are good we get rewards. I like the staff because they are like our Mums and Dads.'

Appropriate arrangements ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe.

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

The senior leadership team has a very clear understanding of the purpose of residential provision and how these aims will be achieved. These are set out in the statement of purpose which is published on the school website. One of the main purposes of residential care is to help young people become more confident and independent, thereby improving their life chances in adulthood. The school is effective in meeting these aims.

The residential provision is managed and organised effectively. The head of care, deputy head of care and house managers have specific roles which integrate together effectively to ensure a high quality of care. For example, one house manager has responsibility for overseeing training and staff supervision, and the deputy head of care is responsible for quality assurance.

The head of care is passionate about providing a high quality of care. He maintains an up-to-date evaluation with the national minimum standards for residential special schools and keeps abreast of national directives and developments from the Department for Education and Ofsted. Good use is made of external professional expertise to gain information and advice about how to improve residential practice. The head of care is proactive in seeking the views of young people, parents and professionals to drive forward improvements in the quality of care. He regularly distributes satisfaction



questionnaires to them and evaluates the feedback to drive improvements.

In accordance with the national minimum standards, an external person visits the residential provision half-termly to evaluate the quality of care provided. The visitor has significant previous experience in residential care management. The visitor monitors all the relevant issues, evaluating documentation and talking to young people and staff. Monitoring of restraints and absconding is not fully developed because it does not clarify the difference between incidents in school time and residential time.

The team of residential staff are skilled, experienced and knowledgeable. All staff feel well-supported. For example, of 32 pre-inspection surveys received from members of staff, 93% said that the school makes appropriate provision for their professional development. All established staff have the necessary qualifications for their role and senior staff have appropriate managerial qualifications. All staff receive formal one-to-one supervision with their line manager every half term. This enables them to discuss and resolve any issues of concern and enables young people's progress to be evaluated.

Levels of staffing are good and help to ensure young people are appropriately supervised. One member of staff said, 'Staffing levels are good and so we can meet children's needs well.' A parent also said, 'There are always enough staff on. The care is very individual to each young person. They don't treat young people as a group that all have to do the same thing. They treat them as individuals with their own special needs and likes and dislikes. I think that's great and it's helped my son improve massively.'

Communication with parents is effective. Parents said they could ring up any time and get a clear understanding of how their child was doing. Parents are fully involved in setting clear development targets with their child and with the staff. The staff then work with the young person in a structured but flexible manner to achieve these targets through everyday residential routines. Parents receive a regular written update about their child's progress which they find useful.

## 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>             | 118140   |
| <b>Social care unique reference number</b> | SC466264 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 810/7007 |

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>           | 35                         |
| <b>Gender of boarders</b>                   | Mixed                      |
| <b>Age range of boarders</b>                | 11 to16                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                          | Mrs Rachel Davies          |
| <b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b> | 23/06/2014                 |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                     | 01482 854 588              |
| <b>Email address</b>                        | admin@oakfield.hull.sch.uk |

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