

# Skilts School

Skilts School, Gorcott Hill, Beoley, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 9ET

<b>Inspection dates</b>	23/01/2017 to 25/01/2017	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Children are proud of their excellent personal achievements.
- Children enjoy the residential service.
- Children recognise and value the friends they make and the relationships that they form. They acknowledge that the social skills they develop have a positive impact on their educational progress and relationships within their families.
- Governors, the senior leadership team and staff successfully safeguard children and educate them to keep themselves safe, in line with their ages and abilities.
- The residential staff team is dedicated to enhancing the experiences and future opportunities of children and their families.
- The residential staff team is long-standing, experienced and professional. Its continuing professional development, both as a team and as individuals, enhances the quality of practice across the whole school.
- Learning and reflection is integral to the whole school's practice. Governors, the senior leadership team and staff are constantly striving to achieve the best for children.
- There are robust external and internal quality assurance processes, which involve feedback from professionals, parents and children. They inform comprehensive action plans, which are owned by the whole school staff team.
- The senior leadership team members are inspirational, passionate leaders. They have excellent oversight of the residential service and continually strive to achieve their

future aspirations. These aspirations are underpinned by appropriate research and ongoing partnership work.

- Governors have clear oversight of the residential service. The chair is actively involved in listening to children and contributes effectively to quality assurance processes.
- There are no shortfalls against the national minimum standards.
- One aspect is identified to enhance further the outstanding practice: to improve the quality of records of sanctions.

### **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?**

- To ensure that records of sanctions reflect the restorative and reflective nature of staff practice and the involvement of and impact on children.

## **Information about this inspection**

This inspection was announced on the morning of the start of the inspection. The inspector visited the residential accommodation, spoke to the children and staff with responsibility for the residential provision and scrutinised school policies and records. The inspector was unable to observe practice in the residential provision as it was closed for unforeseen maintenance work. The inspector gathered information from Parent View and was able to speak to parents during the inspection.

## **Inspection team**

Dawn Bennett

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Skilts is a local authority residential special school for 80 boys between five and 11 years old with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and associated learning difficulties. The school is situated in Warwickshire, close to the Worcestershire and Birmingham borders, but operated by Birmingham City Council for Birmingham children. There are two joined residential houses. They have the capacity for 20 residential pupils, but currently 13 boys use the residence. They can sleep between one and three nights a week, depending on their need, from Tuesday to Thursday, in term time only.

## Inspection judgements

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

**Outstanding**

Outcomes for children are outstanding. They have a highly inclusive, yet individualised and well-planned residential experience that enables them to make significant strides in their educational, personal and social development. They enjoy their residential experience, are proud of their contribution to it and their achievements, and have exceptionally positive relationships with residential staff.

Parents and external professionals spoken to all say that the residential service is extremely beneficial and makes a significant difference to children's lives. A key strength of the service is the residential staff team. Its staff are passionate, dynamic and always child-centred. A parent said: 'The energy of staff is infectious.'

Children value the residential service. A child said: 'Residential is brilliant. We do loads of activities. We have fun with friends. Staff help us with problems. They also help us achieve targets.'

Children make excellent progress in relation to their previous experiences, they engage with staff and are motivated to learn. They make significant progress in relation to their starting points. The positive relationships that staff have with children enable them to achieve excellent participation. Children take ownership of targets and are proud of their achievements. Children know that they are making significant personal progress, which helps them to build and sustain relationships and achieve success.

Children develop self-esteem and self-worth, and become confident individuals. They experience a wide range of new opportunities, activities and experiences. They successfully participate in these and enjoy themselves alongside peers. Not only do they learn new skills and hobbies, they also learn how to socialise and interact. They know that they are successful and are making progress because staff and peers congratulate them and celebrate their achievements. Praise is encouraged and freely given. For example, each child has an affirmation poster in his room with quotes gathered by staff specifically relating to him from teachers, staff, family and peers praising his qualities and achievements.

Children learn skills which have a significant positive impact on other areas of their lives. As a result of attending the residential service, attendance at school increases and academic outcomes improve. Relationships at home with family members improve. Healthier day-to-day routines learned during residential stays transfer home. One child now restricts his use of the computer at home, as well as at school, in favour of taking part in more active and interactive pastimes. Another has used the woodwork skills he has learned during his residential stays to make reindeer at home to sell at Christmas.

Staff place a strong emphasis on developing independence and resilience. This helps children to take responsibility for themselves and others. Sensitive support for independence means that children do not consider their participation to be an extension

of the school day and formal learning. They achieve through fun activities, improving all independent living skills, such as travelling, shopping, cooking and personal care.

## **The quality of care and support**

**Outstanding**

Staff are excellent role models for children. Their relationships positively influence change in children. A parent said: 'I can't praise the staff here enough. My son has made so much progress. He came home the other day and told me he no longer needs to see the speech and language therapist. He stated: "he is learning all he needs about managing his stammer from (a residential member of staff)". He is a real role model. He is talking openly about also having a stammer and they are working together on strategies. I now see him using these at home.'

Staff work proactively in partnership with parents and professionals to ensure the best outcomes for children. This work is enhanced by a parent liaison worker who is available to all parents and works closely with the residential staff team. The whole school staff team is involved in creatively providing additional non-judgemental support and information via daily conversations, the school website, newsletters, additional information and parent training days. This helps parents to develop coping mechanisms, problem-solving and relationship-building skills. A parent said: 'My self-esteem as a parent has improved so much. They don't just "do" for the children, they also embrace us and are always there for us as parents.'

Staff give a strong focus to nurture and the emotional well-being of the child and their family. They stabilise children, who are often in crisis, effectively. They provide reassuring routines that promote consistent, caring, healthy routines that allow children to feel secure and safe to flourish. They provide children who are often experiencing inconsistencies in other areas of their lives a constant safe haven.

Staff give time and energy to building trusting relationships with children through listening, caring, humour and mutual respect. Their practice is tailored to the individual needs of children and their parents and carers. This attention to detail is present from admission, throughout a child's stay until they make the move on to a new service. Staff listen to children and actively involve them in decisions, such as what new activities and food they would like to try. Their suggestions and ideas are used to make reasonable changes to the residential experience.

Staff ensure that children access any additional services they might require to improve their outcomes. They refer to therapeutic support, the child and adolescent mental health services, a speech and language therapist and the school nurse. Staff work in close partnership with these professionals and ensure that any recommendations are incorporated in their work practice with individual children.

The staff's in-depth knowledge of children is reflected in comprehensive care plans. Staff regularly meet with other professionals, parents and carers to exchange key information, to monitor progress and to set new targets, aims and objectives. Work is currently under way to make the presentation to and content of these meetings more child-friendly. This

close partnership work enables the staff to measure the efficiency and impact of residential stays.

## How well children and young people are protected

**Outstanding**

Children learn protective behaviours that keep them safe. Staff use a wide range of tools from different theories, methodologies and approaches to promote personal well-being and safety. They ensure that learning is delivered through age-appropriate, varied and fun activities. Learning will often relate to a difficulty an individual is facing, but the activity will involve all children, teaching skills and knowledge that benefit everyone. For example, an activity that helps children learn about appropriate and inappropriate touch was delivered in an arts and crafts session. The resulting artwork is prominently displayed in the residential accommodation, stimulating day-to-day discussions and the opportunity to consider and discuss appropriate behaviours.

Staff also involve parents actively in the process of increasing children's safety and supervision. For example, the parent liaison officer was about to send out NSPCC information leaflets to all parents on e-safety to increase their knowledge and awareness. Also during the inspection, a group of parents were attending training run by staff at the school to learn skills in de-escalating challenging behaviours at home.

Children know how to raise concerns and make complaints because staff regularly and creatively talk about it. For example, all children have a poster in their bedroom of a drawing of their hand. The names of those friends, family members, teachers or residential staff who they identify they would talk to are written on each digit of the hand. In addition, children have access to the independent listener, regular visits from the chair of governors and a range of external helpline numbers. These facilities give children a trusted adult with whom they can raise a concern. There have been no complaints since the last inspection that relate to the residential service.

Children's safety and well-being is promoted at all times. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are well established and systematically reviewed. They underpin regular whole-staff training. This covers a wide range of subjects that include the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, female genital mutilation, the safe use of information and communication technology and awareness-raising in relation to child sexual exploitation.

All staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities, which ensures an excellent level of safety for children. The school has two designated safeguarding leads, ensuring joint decision-making and that there is always someone available to refer a concern to. Staff identify welfare concerns and apply procedures without hesitation. Appropriate referrals have been made when there have been allegations, although these are in relation to the school day, and not the residential provision. Established links with children's services ensure that concerns receive prompt attention. Child protection records are clear, and detail the immediate action taken to protect children's welfare. Serious case reviews are regularly used to review the school's procedures and staff practice and identify any lessons that can be learned.

Well-informed, proactive staff practice ensures that incidents of high risk or affecting a child's safety are minimal. Staffing levels and effective supervision of children mean that there are no incidents of children leaving the site without permission or being unaccounted for. There are no concerns in regard to child sexual exploitation, although the staff have a well-informed understanding of the signs to be aware of. Bullying is not identified as a concern. Staff monitor this through a range of activities including regular anti-bullying surveys with children. This information is used to inform regular awareness-raising activities, which ensures its continued high profile. Staff have a clear picture of patterns and trends of inappropriate behaviour. Preventative actions are taken, which result in a very low number of incidents. Physical interventions are rare, and when they do occur they are comprehensively monitored and evaluated, including an opportunity for the staff and the child to reflect on any lessons learned. Sanctions are also rare and are well managed by staff. This sensitive practice is not reflected in the records of sanctions. This makes it hard for senior leaders to monitor the quality of staff practice and the effectiveness of lessons learned by children.

Children develop skills that promote their personal safety and broaden their opportunities. For example, they develop personal care skills to minimise their dependence on others. They complete tasks first with physical prompts, then verbal prompts and then independently. Parents express confidence in the safety and security of the school. No new residential staff have been appointed since the last inspection. Recruitment procedures are robust, ensuring that children are not at risk from inappropriate people working with them. The building is well maintained, safe and secure. Children take part in fire drills, ensuring that they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

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

**Outstanding**

Governors, the senior leadership team and the whole school staff team acknowledge the strength of the residential service in adding to the overall quality of the service provided by the school to children and their families.

The service is highly inclusive. Governors, the senior leadership team and staff are determined that all children will achieve their very best. They plan and support with this in mind and convey their ambitions to children skilfully.

The residential provision is exceptionally well managed. The consistently excellent residential care practice echoes the aims and objectives of the school. The head of care and the headteacher are ambitious in their constant drive for improvement; they consistently look for new ideas, research, training opportunities and greater partnership working. These highly motivated leaders develop professional staff and confident children who are enthusiastic about learning and strive to reach their potential.

The senior leadership team and residential staff are flexible and imaginative. The residential service has been closed since October 2016 for unforeseen maintenance work to be completed. During this time, residential staff have continued to work directly with children to maintain their relationships, continued to develop aspects of the residential



service and extended the school day, and have run activities including cooking, swimming and arts and crafts.

All residential staff are experienced and professional. They are also enthusiastic and passionate about delivering an excellent service to children and their families. They are appropriately qualified. They also attend additional training and gather additional knowledge and skills to ensure that they continue to meet the evolving needs of children. Each individual staff member is trained or skilled to take on a professional lead. They play key roles in areas such as child protection, behaviour management, protective behaviours and autistic spectrum disorder that benefit the whole school staff team. They are highly effective and knowledgeable as a team. They use regular meetings, supervisions and appraisal to reflect on practice and identify areas for development. All residential staff feel valued by governors and the senior leadership team.

The senior leadership team is proactive in its use of quality assurance processes. It uses them effectively to drive up standards, the quality of care and outcomes for children. They use external and internal audits that scrutinise practice and gather the views of children, families and professionals. The chair of governors takes a lead in overseeing the residential service and visits the children while in residency every half term. She produces informative reports that ensure that all governors are well informed and give areas for improvement to the senior leadership team.

All national minimum standards are met and there is one recommendations for improvement identified as a result of this inspection.

## 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's 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>	103617
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC033753
<b>DfE registration number</b>	330/7037

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>	13
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	5 to 11
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Crompton
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	10/12/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 853851
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@skilts.bham.sch.uk

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