

Springfield House School

Kenilworth Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands B93 0AJ

Inspection dates

13/03/2017 to 15/03/2017

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

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Children enjoy their residential experience and make good progress from their starting points.
- Children enthusiastically participate in a wide range of activities, both on site and in the local and wider community, that increase their social interaction and self-esteem.
- Staff provide good-quality care that drives personalised outcomes for all children.
- Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the children's individual needs and vulnerabilities.
- Children enjoy positive relationships with residential care staff. This enables them to express their views and to have their voices heard.
- Staff work collaboratively with other professionals and families for the benefit of children.
- Staff are good role models, and form positive relationships with children and their families and carers.
- Staff ensure the safety and well-being of all children.
- There are some areas for improvement. A number of operational policies and procedures do not specifically relate to the residential setting. Records pertaining

to the use of physical restraint do not consistently include all necessary information. Catering arrangements are weak. There are no clear aims and objectives for the ongoing development of the residential provision or bespoke statement of purpose in place.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

- Ensure that a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the Statement of Purpose specific to the residential provision is to be available to parents and staff, is made known to children through an appropriate method of communication and is seen to work in practice. The statement describes the overall purpose and development of the residential provision and describes any theoretical or therapeutic model underpinning the practice of the school. (National minimum standard 1.1)
- Ensure that all children are provided with meals which are adequate in quality, choice and variety. (National minimum standard 8.1)
- Ensure that the school has arrangements that safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school, with specific reference to notifying the host local authority and host local authority designated officer when safeguarding issues arise whilst on school/ residence site. (National minimum standard 11.1)
- Ensure that all children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours of an incident of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (National minimum standard 12.5)
- Ensure a written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The residential service is to regularly review any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (National minimum standard 12.6)
- Ensure that the school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary. This is with specific reference to the residential provision. (National minimum standard 13.1)
- Ensure that there is a clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential provision in the school. (National minimum standard 13.2)

- Ensure that the school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1. This is with specific reference to a sick child policy within residential provision (National minimum standard 13.7)
- Ensure that 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. (National minimum standard 15.6)

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that there is a clear distinction and personalisation of policies between education and the residential provision. This is with specific reference to the behaviour management policy.
- For best practice, senior managers should apply the same scrutiny around safer recruitment to all staff and volunteers, inclusive of governors. This specifically relates to reference checks for governors.
- Ensure that there is a suitable and age-appropriate complaints procedure in place that is accessible for children. This will enable children to make an independent complaint without the support of an adult.

Information about this inspection

This residential inspection took place following the appropriate notice period for this type of visit. Two inspectors carried out the inspection and reviewed the policies, documentation, residential provision and organisation over a period of three days. A regulatory inspector manager attended the inspection for the purpose of quality assurance. The inspectors spoke to the headteacher, the residential leadership team, residential staff and children. Inspectors spent one evening in the residential accommodation observing staff and children's interactions and activities. The inspectors also joined the children during breakfast time. In addition, the inspectors sought feedback from parents and professionals.

Inspection team

Lisa Walsh	Lead social care inspector
Jo Stephenson	Social care inspector
Andy Waugh	Social care inspector manager

Full report

Information about this school

Springfield House School is a maintained school operated by Birmingham City Council. It is a residential community special school for boys and girls aged 4 to 11 with a range of special educational needs. The majority have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Some have learning difficulties and some are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders. The school currently has 108 pupils and is open on weekdays and term time only. The school is in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull, and can accommodate 10 children in The Lodge. There are two adjoining corridors that operate with separate small groups. The residential provision is a flexible 12-week arrangement for up to four nights a week.

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Children make good social, emotional and physical progress that supports their continual learning and educational achievements. Staff monitor children's progress against their agreed targets, and their achievements are constantly celebrated and rewarded. As a result, children engage fully in their time at The Lodge and have a positive experience of their residential life.

Relationships between staff and children are extremely positive. These relationships are based on mutual understanding and respect. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of each individual child and are skilled at meeting their diverse needs. As a result, incidents do not escalate and the need for physical restraint is relatively low.

Families are enthusiastic about the care that their children receive. Staff have excellent relationships with families. This includes having regular contact and dialogue. Families say that their views matter. They feel able to discuss any areas of concern, and are confident that managers will take their concerns seriously. Families are able to see at home the benefits of the residential provision. For example, a parent commented: 'My child's social skills have improved greatly. She is more independent and is doing things for herself. She is able to interact and communicate with people better.'

Consultation with children is embedded in the daily practice and routines of the residential provision. Children are encouraged to express their views and ideas. This is central to the arrangements of activities and menu choices. Staff listen to the children and ensure that all their views are gathered and, when possible, acted on. This is further supported by visits made by the independent person. They complete a report of their findings for the leadership team to consider. This helps to improve standards for the children.

Children embrace the opportunity to participate in a wide and varied range of stimulating activities. The staff are creative in their approach to activities. They utilise the internet for arts and crafts ideas. Activities are age appropriate and inclusive. All children, regardless of their skills and abilities, are encouraged to take part.

Children develop their social interaction skills and form appropriate emotional connections and relationships with their peers through these shared experiences. This supports their personal growth and development.

The quality of care and support

Good

Children experience a good standard of care which meets their needs and individual circumstances. Staff are committed and motivated. Children receive care and activities which are tailored to meet their personal needs. Information is shared between care and education staff, developing a consistent level of care. Daily handover meetings help staff to examine the children's day in school and identify any possible evening issues. This helps the staff to plan for any potential difficulties or to celebrate children's particular achievements.

There are good transitional arrangements in place which take into consideration each child's needs. Other professionals are also involved in the transitional planning to ensure

that they secure the best possible outcomes for the children. Staff use social stories and other aids to help make sure that transitions are positive and as smooth as possible.

Mealtimes are relaxed and sociable occasions. Children are consistently encouraged to display socially acceptable behaviours. This can include encouraging children to lay the table and put food away. However, the quality and standard of the food provided for children in The Lodge is poor. The independent visitor for the residential setting raised this concern in March 2016. A newly commissioned catering contract is due to commence shortly, to take responsibility for the provision of meals in the residential provision. This process has been a lengthy one, meaning that children have been without suitably prepared meals within for approximately one year.

Staff are forward thinking about young people's transitions to adulthood. This includes encouraging them to begin developing essential life skills. For example, they develop skills such as tidying their bedrooms and making snacks. Staff help young people to acquire skills associated with managing self-care and cooking. One parent told the inspector, 'Residence has helped my child to become more responsible. He uses his own initiative, tidying his room and making his bed. His social interaction is also much better'.

The residential accommodation is of an acceptable standard. It is clean and safe, but looks a little tired. Each child has their own bedroom which they can personalise to their own taste during their stay. Children's experiences are enhanced by plenty of safe outdoor play areas which the children can access with support from staff. A parent commented, 'Staff are caring and nurturing. They do as much as they can to make the residence feel like home, creating a comfortable environment. My child is able to take personal items.'

Staff ensure that children access any additional services that they might require to improve their outcomes. For example, staff will refer children to the child and adolescent mental health services and speech and language therapists, when necessary. Staff work in close partnership with these professionals and incorporate any recommendations into their work practice with individual children.

Staff promote the active involvement of children in decision-making processes affecting the operation and development of the residential service. The views of children are proactively sought, individually and collectively. Children receive regular visits from an independent visitor. These facilities give children a trusted adult with whom they can raise a concern.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Staff see partnership work with families and other professionals, such as the school nurse, social workers and child and adolescent mental health services and voluntary family support services, as vitally important. These effectual partnerships support children's continuing progress and development.

Staff implement effective health and safety and fire procedures that promote everyone's safety. These include regular daytime fire drills and fire system checks. Staff adhere to robust medication administration procedures that further promote children's safety. The school has a designated safeguarding lead. He meets with care staff to discuss any emerging concern. This promotes children's safety and well-being at all times. There are

established recruitment procedures to ensure that children are not at risk from inappropriate adults working with them. Staff recruitment is robust. The leadership of the school is intending to improve practice by introducing reference checks for governors.

Staff training covers a wide range of subjects that include the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, the safe use of information and communication technology, and awareness raising in relation to child sexual exploitation.

Staff are skilled in managing incidents of challenging behaviour and other potentially high-risk situations that affect a child's safety. The use of physical restraint is rare, because staff use their positive relationships with children to reassure them and manage their behaviours. They take preventative actions by adjusting activities and staffing levels, and managing the environment. They promote the importance of communicating feelings and emotions. They organise activities and play that promote turn taking, listening and interacting with others to develop these skills.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

There have been changes at the school since the last inspection. These include a staff restructuring and seven new residential staff. The leadership team has also improved the induction process and supervision arrangements for staff. Subsequently, staff have the necessary skills to support children's development, and leaders and managers monitor their practice and performance.

The residential aspect of the school is highly thought of by governors, managers, staff, external professionals, children and parents. Everyone works in partnership to meet the needs of the children. There is a consistent expectation that children's experiences of their residential stay should be positive and thus enable them to progress in aspects of their behaviour, learning and social skills.

The staff working at The Lodge have a positive impact on the children's development. However, there is a lack of formal monitoring and a review of this by the leadership team and governing body. The absence of a statement of purpose and a development plan means that there is a lack of clear aims and objectives for the residential services. This hinders the opportunity for governors, leaders and staff to work together to continually improve standards and outcomes for children.

Arrangements are in place relating to the management of allegations and the investigation of any complaints or concerns. However, senior leaders and managers have not sufficiently revised the safeguarding and child protection policy. This document does not specify that staff must refer allegations of concern to the designated officer for the host local authority, not the child's home local authority. Due to this lack of clarity, one incident had been referred to the incorrect team for advice.

Children know how to raise concerns and make a formal complaint. Nevertheless, the current complaints policy and procedure is not child friendly. This limits the opportunity for children to make an independent complaint without the support of an adult.

Staff practice is well informed through training. However, there is an absence of clear policies around how to care for a child who becomes unwell and behaviour management policies specific to the residential provision. This creates the opportunity for inconsistent practice. However, staff do understand the individual complex needs of children well and staffing levels are high. There are no incidents of children leaving the school without permission or going missing. Nevertheless, the missing from care policy does not explicitly refer to the residential provision. Furthermore, the policy is not compatible with the local runaway and missing from home and care protocols, and procedures applicable to the area in which the school is located. There are no concerns with regard to child sexual exploitation, although the staff have a well-informed understanding of the signs and indicators of this form of abuse. Children do not identify bullying as a concern, but staff remain vigilant for signs of this behaviour.

Behaviour management strategies are largely effective and staff use physical restraint only as a last resort. However, there is a lack of sufficient monitoring and effective evaluation around practice. Staff involved in these incidents on occasions discuss and reflect on any lessons learned, but do not routinely record these discussions. This does not support staff to consider how they might react differently next time to reduce the need for physical restraint. There is a lack of de-briefings of children, and their views are not always captured. These shortfalls are administrative, not an indication of unsafe practice. However, without improvements to these records, there are questions regarding the lawfulness of the use of these measures of control, going forward. The systems and records currently used are under review, and senior leaders and managers recognise the need for improvement. This shortfall has a limited impact on children's welfare and safety, because incidents of physical restraint are rare.

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

Unique reference number	103623
Social care unique reference number	SC042411
DfE registration number	330/7074

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	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	82
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	5 to 12
Headteacher	Janet Collins
Date of previous boarding inspection	02/02/2016
Telephone number	01564 772772
Email address	janet.collins@spfldhs.bham.sch.uk

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