

Vale of Evesham School

Vale of Evesham School, Four Pools Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 1BN

Inspection dates	13/03/2017 to 15/03/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
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

- The management and staff team continue to drive improvement and are proactive in sharing their expertise as they welcome managers from other local authority residential services. These visits have driven improvement in other services.
- High-quality interactions with care and education staff enable children and young people to feel valued and they make exceptional progress. This progress is seen in better education outcomes, improved speech, better sign language, making new friends and exceptional development in becoming more independent.
- One parent said that the residential experience has given their child 'wings so he can fly'. Another stated that their child is 'a different child' since using the residential provision.
- The voice of the child is central to staff practice. For example, children and young people co-chair the pupil forum, they are central to the review of the admission process and have control over what is displayed on the notice boards throughout the residential setting.
- Leaders, managers and staff have high aspirations for children, young people and themselves. This positive culture promotes an enabling environment where everyone prospers: children, young people and staff alike.
- Vigilance, ever-consistent attention to detail and excellent information sharing promote early intervention to ensure effective safeguarding of children and young people throughout the school.
- Care is excellent because managers organise training to ensure seamless progression.
- Leaders and staff place great emphasis on the role that the residential setting plays in improving educational achievement.

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?

- Review and streamline medication recording procedures.
- Improve consistency between first and second references in recruitment.
- Review and consult with parents, children and young people about how to improve the transition process for when children and young people prepare to leave the residential service.
- Streamline and archive historical information in some children and young people's files.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was completed by one inspector following a two-hour notice period. Time was spent over two days in the residential accommodation, and several children and young people contributed their views and experiences and helped with a tour of the accommodation. A range of care, staffing and health and safety records were examined. Discussions were held with members of the management team, care staff, the designated safeguarding officers, parents and other external professionals.

Inspection team

Elaine Cray

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The school is an academy and is directly responsible to a governing body. Vale of Evesham School provides education for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders and learning disabilities. The school caters for 188 pupils in total. The residential service operates from Monday to Friday and can accommodate up to 15 students. There were 14 children and young people receiving a service at the time of the inspection and their age range was 9 to 18 years. The school's last inspection was in February 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Children and young people excel both educationally and socially as a result of attending the residential provision at this school. Their comments about their experiences include, 'It's awesome and we do amazing stuff.'

The residential provision offers a vibrant and nurturing environment where children and young people can continue to work on their educational and social targets. Relationships with staff and other children are of the highest quality and enable children and young people to build confidence, make positive after-school friendships and try a vast range of new experiences.

Parents are extremely positive about their children's progress, particularly in terms of becoming more independent and using sign language. They are pleased with the new opportunities that their children experience. For example, one parent never thought she would see her son go on holiday, share a room with other children and be giggling away with his friends at bedtime. Parents' comments include, 'I can see him flourishing, thriving, and having good relationships with staff,' 'I can relax because I know my son receives nurture and is safe' and, 'My son's needs are so well met here. I was very apprehensive about a special school but this is great.'

Records, displays and individual achievement books show and celebrate the positive experiences of children and young people. Parents particularly enjoy the newly developed blog. They can now access photos and up-to-date information about what their children are experiencing and see their enjoyment while they stay away from home.

Information sharing with parents and skilful observation mean that staff know the smallest things about children and young people. This attention to detail and celebration of uniqueness ensure that children and young people thrive and learn at the setting.

Children and young people enjoy full participation, as the voice of the child shines through all of the activities arranged by the school. Comments from the link governor for the residential setting include, 'The bottom line is always – what does this look like through the eyes of the child?' This sums up the excellent child-centred focus and practice by leaders and staff.

Children and young people enjoy a vast range of activities, including walking, swimming, baking, dancing and art work. They become more confident and outgoing as they try new opportunities. Regular outdoor activities, with plenty of physical exercise, benefit their health.

Health outcomes are excellent because children and young people fully understand the importance of healthy eating and good personal hygiene. Mealtimes are a social event. Children and young people thoroughly enjoy the nutritious meals, and the catering staff respond well to individual needs, likes and dislikes. Children and young people's manners are impeccable and a credit to the school.

Children and young people develop excellent independence skills. For example, one of the three units accommodates older young people and all have detailed plans and independence targets to develop skills and emotional maturity for when they move on to adult placements. They enjoy the responsibility for managing their personal hygiene, helping around the unit, doing their own washing, cooking with each other and thinking up new ideas for fundraising.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Children and young people thrive in this setting because care planning, risk assessment and behaviour management dovetail into practical staff practice and support.

Partnership working with parents and education staff ensures that the needs of each child and young person are individually identified and sensitively met. Staff attention to detail is outstanding, both in terms of written records and staff practice. Most children and young people's files are well organised and provide excellent guidance for staff. However, some files contained a lot of historic information, and streamlining files is set as an area for improvement.

The already effective care planning framework continues to develop. Further focus on the voice of the child is improving the admissions review process, with children and young people talking about and recording their own individual experience and ideas for improvement. Incident recording now places more focus on the experience and voice of the child. The new recording format, including pictures, signs and symbols, now ensures that children and young people of all abilities can give feedback about how staff manage their behaviour, including when physical intervention is used.

Communication with children and young people remains a key strength and continues to improve further. Sign language is now a consistent tool for all children, young people and staff. Structured training, both for care and education staff, means that all staff use core sign language in conjunction with symbols and pictures. Children and young people are able to express their views and feel more understood because of this excellent development. Their anxieties decrease and behaviour improves as they feel more empowered and have more self-determination.

Parents, children and young people fully appreciate the sensitive and supportive transition process from the family home to the residential provision. Each parent spoken with on this inspection gave individual examples of how the needs of their child and their own needs were catered for. One child packed his own suitcase to include pictures, a rug, light and toys. He is happy that these are in his bedroom.

Health outcomes for children and young people are extremely positive. Staff support children and young people's healthcare by helping them to attend appointments and understand their medical conditions and necessary interventions. For example, social stories and encouragement by staff give one young person reassurance and good information about an imminent admission to hospital.

Leaders and staff place children and young people's emotional and mental health as a high priority. For example, liaison between parents, staff and child mental health agencies ensures that medication options are thoroughly explored. Some young people now enjoy improved behaviour and interactions, both in school, at home and in the residential provision due to the subsequent changes to their medication.

Some older young people have successfully left the school and the residential provision. While they are settled and doing well in new placements, feedback from some parents mentioned the possible need for more information during the moving-on process. The management team embraces this feedback and is keen to develop this area for improvement.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Child protection and safeguarding procedures are promoted effectively throughout the school. The safeguarding framework is robust due to outstanding liaison with children and young people's parents, social workers and the local authority safeguarding team when required.

Children and young people experience high levels of safety because the staff team is constantly vigilant and skilled in understanding that the smallest picture can contribute to the larger landscape of keeping children and young people safe. Liaison with a local authority children's services social worker leads to early discussion, inclusion of parents and intervention. These open and transparent processes reassure parents, lead to meaningful interventions and quickly resolve concerns as they arise.

Safety is promoted with excellent security measures throughout the school. Children and young people know what to do in the event of a fire due to regular practices. They are safe due to meticulous health and safety arrangements covering areas that include outdoor activities, holidays, swimming and building dens.

Robust and individualised risk assessment leads to practical and realistic risk management. Staff promote an effective balance between children and young people's safety and the opportunity to grow up positively and experience a range of new and exciting activities.

Bespoke behaviour management plans, staff training and rigorous monitoring of behaviour management ensure that children and young people experience excellent support. Consequently, their behaviour improves. Attention to detail about each individual child and young person leads to expert behaviour management. Individual anxieties, communication needs and behavioural challenges are fully understood and uniquely managed to ensure that all children and young people can take part in and safely enjoy activities with their friends.

Close monitoring of patterns and trends enables leaders to have in-depth understanding of triggers, and most importantly shows a significant decline in the use of physical intervention. This decline is particularly significant for those children and young people who attend the residential provision.

Children and young people are protected with up-to-date e-safety training for staff and close scrutiny of computer use in the school and residential setting. Effective liaison with parents promotes good awareness for children, young people and their families across all aspects of safer computer use.

Compatibility assessments are key to the admissions process, safety and how well young people get on with each other. Children and young people live harmoniously and there are no concerns about bullying.

Children and young people's medical needs are protected with sound administration procedures implemented by well-trained staff. However, the management team acknowledges that there are some inconsistencies in medication recording across the three units. While action was taken quickly at the time of inspection, a review of the medication recording is set as an area for improvement.

Children and young people are protected with robust recruitment procedures, including all required references and background checks. However, leaders are asked to consider the consistency of the quality of second references as an area for improvement.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Leadership is outstanding because the management and staff team implement a measured and strategic approach to monitoring and driving improvement.

For example, developments in independence preparation are strategic and embrace the existing qualities of staff and resources in the provision. As always, the management and staff team never stand still. They are already liaising with other agencies, such as housing associations, to develop resources further, both within the school and in the community. Working in partnership in the community places great emphasis on meeting the development needs of young people as they progressively move towards adulthood.

This outward-looking management and staff team routinely visits other services in order to drive improvement. For example, the current focus on sign language training has been developed since the headteacher was 'blown away by the level of signing' after a trip to another school. This inspiration is now being strategically replicated in the residential setting. Leaders and speech and language therapists are also looking at other forms of assistive technology to ensure that children and young people with sight impairment can also express their views and contribute to the running of the school.

Proactive partnership working gives children and young people varied access to community resources. For example, children and young people enjoy a weekly swimming club, visit a local cinema and enjoy art work due to the staff's excellent links in the local community.

Focused training and strong leadership ensure that children and young people are always placed at the centre of staff practice. For example, new debriefing processes, admissions reviews and communication developments arise from the drive to improve

outcomes for children and young people.

Children and young people are cared for by a team of well-trained staff. Children and young people experience excellent care because staff value training. New staff rate induction training very highly. They are keen to progress in their probationary period and value the ongoing training that they receive.

Care and outcomes are excellent because staff practice is built on a firm foundation of well-understood policies and procedures, which are consistently reinforced with effective induction, staff supervision, refresher training and focused team meetings.

Monitoring is robust, and the continued progress of children and young people is continuously celebrated in the head of care's written reports. He personally attends all the governors' meetings. One governor sums up this commitment by saying, 'The head of care comes to the governors' meetings with so much enthusiasm. We go through all the paperwork and look at patterns and trends. I can connect and triangulate evidence every single time. Very proactive and the slightest thing is covered and documented.'

Independent monitoring visits are carried out regularly and thoroughly. The governor responsible for monitoring the residential provision is exceptionally complimentary of 'the golden thread' that she says runs through the management and quality of care at the provision. Comments about the head of care include, 'His manner with the children is wonderful; he is clearly in charge of the staff and when it comes to looking at the paperwork, you can see he is an excellent manager.'

The two areas for improvement from the last inspection to verify references and keep a tally of paracetamol are met. Leaders and staff embrace feedback and they are keen to work on areas for improvement from this inspection; for example, streamlining files, reviewing medication records, improving the quality of a second reference and giving more consideration to how parents can be better supported when their children come to leave the residential setting.

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 exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact that 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	139444
Social care unique reference number	SC043049
DfE registration number	

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	15
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 18
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Garside
Date of previous boarding inspection	02/02/2016
Telephone number	01386 443367
Email address	stephengarside@advancetrust.org

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