

# The Springfields Academy

Springfields School, Curzon Street, CALNE, Wiltshire SN11 0DS  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Springfields Academy is set in a small rural town in Wiltshire. The school offers day and residential provision for pupils who have social and/or emotional difficulties and/or high-functioning autistic spectrum disorders, who have the potential to access the primary or secondary school curriculum. The residential accommodation is on the school site in three separate buildings. All residential pupils return home at weekends and during school holidays.

**Inspection dates:** 7 to 9 June 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 16 to 18 May 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Children talk positively about their experiences in the residential provision, and are making good progress. They make the most of a wealth of extra-curricular activities. In addition to general day-to-day activities, the school offers some fun and creative opportunities for children to have new experiences.
- There are warm, trusting and nurturing relationships between staff and children. Staff treat children with dignity and respect, and the quality of their relationships is exemplary. Staff support children with enthusiasm and care. A consistent team of staff cares for the children.
- Leaders and managers implement effective systems to safeguard the children and protect them from harm. Staff have a clear understanding of the child protection policy.
- Leaders and managers have implemented a new ethos in terms of positive behaviour management. Staff use strategies to support children to manage their own behaviour. The use of restraint has dramatically reduced since the start of the academic year.
- Children have access to good support and guidance in terms of meeting their health needs. Arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are safe.
- Leaders and managers have a strong presence in the home. The on-call system supports the day-to-day running of the residential provision and provides staff with additional support when required. Supervision and appraisals are regular and effective.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Review the arrangements for earned privileges taking into account the child's age and skills required that will aid them to move on successfully. (NMS 2.8)
- Empower staff in their roles to develop the home and quality of care. (NMS 19.1)
- Improve the quality of the care plans so they incorporate all the necessary information required to meet the child's needs. (NMS 21.1)

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

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

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

- Accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of children accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between girls and boys, age groups and accommodation for adults. Bedding is clean and suitable, and is sufficiently warm. In particular, improve the homeliness of accommodation taking into account the quality and choice of furniture, décor and soft furnishings. Improve the quality of the beds and mattresses, reviewing the use of waterproof mattresses. (NMS 5.5)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. In particular, ensure that the monitoring systems in place to review these records are effective, identify patterns and trends and a clear link to the impact to children. (NMS 13.8)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include:
  - checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children;
  - evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded;
  - assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and
  - opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

In particular, ensure that monitoring visits evidence that any child or member of staff can meet the visitor in private if they wish. Ensure that the independent visitor visits children in their residential provision. Ensure that the monitoring visit assesses the quality and suitability of the accommodation (NMS 20.2).

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children are having positive experiences that support them to achieve and make progress. Children recognise the good progress that they are making. A DVD produced by a group of children tells the story of how the residential provision has enriched their lives. It shows how the children have become more confident, independent and able to socialise. Parents and carers talk positively about the care their children receive and their children's experiences of being a residential pupil.

The quality of relationships between children and staff is a strength. Children have confidence in the staff and are able to talk to them about their feelings or any problems they may have. Staff laugh with the children, they have fun and tailor the evenings to the children's interests. Staff show the utmost respect for children; they are courteous and provide warm and nurturing care. Relationships are now much stronger than they were previously.

Staff are positive about the children and they have aspirations for them. Children, parents and carers talk highly of the care staff. One parent said, 'The head of care and her team are brilliant, they work hard for our children.'

Children have a busy time out of school because of the number of different activities on offer. The residential homes sit within the school grounds which gives children a large outdoor space to go for a walk, play football, play Frisbee and learn to use their 'Heelys'. The children also like to spend time on laptops, computer games and portable gaming devices and tablets. In addition to this, the staff help the children to 'think out of the box' about different activities they would like to do. During the inspection, one group of children completed a 'Tough Mudder' challenge which they found very exciting. Some children went to Scotland for the day so that they could go on an aeroplane.

Children are confident and empowered to express their views about their care and experiences. House meetings and one-to-one conversations with key workers are examples of the methods used to listen to children's views. Recently, leaders and managers changed their plan of house moves following a consultation with the children.

There are good arrangements in place to ensure that the health needs of children are met. Children have access to whichever health professionals they need. The school has a designated healthcare practitioner who has introduced systems that improve the health and well-being of children. This includes a good system for the management and administration of medication.

A designated teacher is responsible for managing the children's transition out of the residential provision. There are positive examples of children moving on successfully

to further education colleges, employment, apprenticeships and work experience. The school seeks the views of parents regarding transitions and this feedback is highly complimentary.

Leaders and managers have reviewed the children's placement plans since the previous inspection as required. The children's records now contain the information necessary to support the children and detail their needs. However, these records are fragmented and do not join up to create an overarching care and placement plan.

The quality of the accommodation requires further attention to bring it up to an acceptable living standard. There is a standardised approach to the choice of beds, mattresses, furniture and soft furnishings. Staff say that children can personalise their bedrooms. However, in one home all the boys' bedrooms are blue or magnolia with no sense of their identity or personality. Bedrooms come across as very uninspiring, they lack warmth and a sense of who the children are who stay there. Substantial structural work has been completed in some of the buildings.

Lunch and dinner are prepared in the main kitchen, and children have the opportunity to comment on the food menus and give their feedback. The chef is developing menus that have a well-balanced nutritional value. Children say they can make snacks in their residential provision. However, there is minimal food in the fridge and cupboards to do this.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

The arrangements to protect children and keep them safe in the residential provision are good. All of the relevant health and safety checks take place regularly. The living accommodation is a safe environment. Children are involved in regular fire evacuation drills. The staff think creatively about how to support children with this. One child has overcome fear of the fire alarm by becoming a fire marshal and supporting staff with the weekly testing and fire drills.

Staff know the children well. They understand individual risks and manage these to help children stay safe. Children's records are clear about any risks to them and offer strategies to minimise those risks. Children say that they feel safe, as do their parents and carers.

Children sometimes go missing during the school day and for a small amount of time. The missing records show children leaving the school site to walk towards the town. Staff follow the children and support them to return to school. Risk assessments are in place for all children who might go missing. When children come back to school the staff complete a return-to-school debrief with them.

The designated safeguarding lead has effective child protection records that detail any concerns relating to the welfare of children. These records include concerns relating to going missing, self-harm and radicalisation. Staff understand their roles in

terms of protecting children, and utilise the child protection procedure effectively. The designated safeguarding lead reports appropriately to the local authority designated officer and social care multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Child protection records do not fully evidence the overall outcome and impact on the child, which would provide further evidence of the positive work they do to protect children.

The designated officer makes the relevant referrals to other agencies that are necessary for the support and protection of children. There are good links with the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). In addition, the children benefit from the school having its own therapy team. Leaders and managers have successfully engaged with the prevent duty to intervene where there may be a risk of radicalisation.

The deputy head of care leads on the 'fair play' strategy to eliminate bullying. Children say that they feel supported by this system and can talk to staff and report bullying. A child said, 'Staff do stop me from getting bullied.' Children are polite and content, and walk around the school and their homes in a calm and respectful manner. Staff encourage children to treat each other with positive regard.

Leaders and managers report a change in culture in terms of managing children's behaviour with a clear focus on positive strategies and de-escalation. This was observed during the inspection as an effective strategy to support children with their anxieties. Children's risk assessments include information about their behaviour and give staff techniques that will best support each individual child. The use of restraint has significantly reduced. Restraint records show that children and staff are offered a debrief following the incident. Parents and carers are always informed of any incident or use of restraint.

Staff are recruited safely in line with safer recruitment guidance. Leaders and managers act on their responsibility to make appropriate referrals to relevant agencies, such as the disclosure and barring service, when necessary.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

Leaders and managers have created monitoring systems that are fragmented. The systems do not support analysis that will lead to developing the residential provision and quality of care.

The monitoring of restraint records lacks rigour. There are gaps in the restraint records under the manager's monitoring section. There is no evidence of where the learning from restraint has taken place or how it has been used to improve children's experiences. This distracts from the positive fact that restraint has reduced since the beginning of the academic year.

Leaders and managers are not identifying weaknesses in records such as the lack of

depth and analysis in care planning documents. Monitoring does not identify how shortfalls impact on children.

The independent visitor does not monitor effectively all aspects of the provision as required. There is no evidence that the independent visitor visits children in their homes or provides them with an opportunity to express their views. Monitoring by the independent visitor has not addressed all of the weaknesses in the quality of the accommodation.

Leaders and managers have not taken effective action to improve the quality of the living accommodation. There is a plan to close one of the homes but the delay in doing so has left children sleeping in poor-quality bedrooms.

The care improvement plan has a focus on the unmet national minimum standards from the previous inspection. Leaders and managers have made good progress in their improvement work, and this inspection has determined that these standards are now met. However, the improvement plan does not identify any other areas for further development. Leaders and managers can verbally advise on the areas they wish to develop but there is no clear plan on how or when they will achieve this vision.

Leaders and managers are strong, passionate and committed to improving the residential provision. They have high expectations for children and are creating a culture for them to thrive in and be ambitious.

Staff retention and morale are high. Staff say that they love their jobs and the team provides consistent care to the children. The head of care provides effective and regular supervision to the care staff who also receive an annual appraisal. The training programme is sufficient to meet the needs of the children. Staff feel supported in their roles.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC039093

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Jon Hamp

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Nicola Lownds, social care inspector (lead)

Linda Bond, social care inspector





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