

# Eaton Hall Specialist Academy

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy, Pettus Road, Norwich NR4 7BU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy is a day and residential special school located in a residential area of Norwich. It is purpose built and largely single storey. The residential accommodation comprises three units on the main site and a large semi-detached house situated a short distance away in a residential area. The school currently provides places for 54 boys who have behavioural and/or emotional and/or social difficulties. The school was last inspected in September 2016.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 14 September 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

**Date of previous inspection:** 19 September 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children make progress educationally, socially and emotionally.
- The children enjoy a range of activities that provide them with the opportunity to try new leisure pursuits.
- The children say that they are happy and confident in the residential provision.
- There is innovative practice regarding peer support.
- Feedback from parents and professionals is positive.
- The children enjoy healthy and varied meals.
- Leaders and managers respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.
- Approaches to supervision and appraisal have improved.
- Approaches to medication administration have improved.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The school does not meet two of the national minimum standards.
- The standard of accommodation is not consistent across both sites.
- Monitoring arrangements are not sufficiently strong.
- The missing-from-school procedure and linked harm-reduction plans lack clarity.

## **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 standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 5.4 Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them.
- 20.2 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).

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the missing-children policy is unambiguous and known to staff and that harm reduction plans offer clear guidance to staff regarding what to do when individual children leave the school site without permission or go missing.

## Inspection judgements

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

The children receive individualised care. They make good progress because of the support that they receive. The children grow in self-belief as they gain skills that bring them in line with their peers. The children thrive on the structure and orderly routines that they experience.

The staff support the children to learn new skills. These include washing, ironing, cooking and cleaning. There is a communal approach to domestic chores. The children cook and serve meals with staff. The staff teach food hygiene and safe food preparation. The children take an active role; they are busy and engaged with the domestic routines. They remind one another about outstanding chores. The children are learning the benefits of working as a team. Working together cooperatively encourages better relationships, and helps the children to acquire valuable life skills.

Meals are balanced and varied. The menu plan includes a healthy option and preferred choice option each day. This balances children's dietary intake. Salads are fresh and colourful; there is an abundance of fresh fruit. The children have the opportunity to try foods that they have not previously tried. Parents report that children's diets become increasingly varied because of the support they receive.

There is a strong partnership with parents. Parents speak positively about the school and the impact that staying in the residential provision has had on their child's progress. Parents report that children make progress in 'leaps and bounds'.

The systems for managing medication have improved. A clear process of competency assessment is now in place and the outcomes are recorded. Parents spoke positively about the proactive approach of the lead staff member for medication to managing their children's health needs.

Innovative approaches identify, support and measure children's social and emotional progress. A therapeutic team oversees this. The development of this therapeutic team is a strength. The creative approach they take includes the implementation of a buddy system. This is peer support, with children supporting children. The staff provide the children with supervision and support to carry out this role. This gives the children the opportunity to assist one another safely.

At the time of the inspection, building work was taking place on the main site. Leaders and managers ensure that those working on site are police checked or supervised by others. There are site meetings every week. The systems are efficient and files are orderly. They demonstrate that services on the main site are carefully monitored to ensure a safe and hazard-free environment. However, despite a number of small hazards the second site being reported, some had not been rectified. The school took action to repair a broken window restrictor, and a fence in the rear garden on the final day of the inspection.

The standard of accommodation is not consistent across both sites. The main site is of a good standard, with purpose-built, modern-style accommodation and single rooms and bathrooms that are central to the communal area. The second residential house, which is located a short distance from the school, is not well maintained. There are environmental concerns that include areas that are not clean or well maintained and decor that is extremely worn. A bar that states 'no entry' to the second floor is ineffective and rooms that are no longer used because of health and safety risks are unlocked. As a result, children experience accommodation that is not well maintained, sufficiently safe, or consistent with the general ethos of aspiration and achievement.

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

The children say that they are happy with and confident in the residential provision. They do not cite bullying as a concern. Parents say that they have no concerns regarding bullying. They have every confidence in the school staff to keep the children safe. Focused surveys have recorded the children's views about safety in and around the school.

Risks for individuals are identified and reduced. Good knowledge of individual children and robust transitions mean that the staff access a lot of information. This informs the plans to reduce harm. The harm-reduction plans are of variable quality. Leaders and managers update these plans in response to incidents. However, harm-reduction plans are not consistently clear regarding the actions expected of the staff if children attempt to or succeed in leaving the school site. A leaving school without permission protocol is in place. Some staff were unaware of how to locate this. This could lead to staff being unsure about what to do in the event of a child being missing.

The staff have high expectations in terms of behaviour and conduct. There is an emphasis on orderly conduct and tidy appearance. The staff help the children to achieve this. For example, those who arrive without the school tie are unobtrusively given a tie by a member of staff. Any child that needs to calm down is reminded to do this immediately, and given space and time to do so. Staff are consistent in their approach, and provide a safe and secure environment. The children know what to expect. This helps them to feel secure. An internal reward scheme gives the children the incentive and motivation to try hard. The children's achievements are celebrated during assemblies.

Leaders and managers respond appropriately when there are concerns about the conduct of staff. Records of investigations are detailed and orderly. Safeguarding professionals speak positively about the swift and efficient response from leaders and managers to safeguarding concerns. The children's safeguarding files are orderly. They show the chronology of interventions. There is good representation from the school at professionals' meetings. The staff are caring, and tenacious in their pursuit of the right support and interventions for vulnerable children.

The school takes internet safety seriously. The staff support the children to understand how to stay safe online. This information is also made available for parents. There is sensible and proactive monitoring of internet use.

Leaders and managers undertake training in, and follow, safe recruitment processes. The recruitment files are orderly and meticulous. They show that staff are vetted carefully prior to employment. This lessens the potential for unsuitable applicants to gain employment at the school.

Leaders and managers have well-established systems for the safe management of the main school site. A dedicated team ensures that service appliance checks are carried out. This is systematic and does not depend on one person. Fire checks and fire drills work extremely well. The children participated in an unannounced fire evacuation during the inspection and this went without a hitch. The management of site contractors is good.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The service is led effectively by a passionate headteacher who has the confidence of the staff, senior managers and governors. An experienced extended management team ably supports him. Leaders and managers have very high expectations and ambitions for the service, the staff and the children. Leaders and managers aspire to deliver a high-quality service. This passion and the culture of aspiration and achievement have a positive effect on the children.

The needs of children are prioritised. The quality of professional relationships at the school is good. The residential provision is an integral part of the whole school. The headteacher stated, 'Without boarding we would not achieve what we achieve with the boys.' Leaders and managers know the children well. The children know the managers, and the managers have a visible presence. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the progress that the children make. They have effective systems for monitoring and reviewing this progress.

Over the past 18 months, leaders and managers have improved the systems for supporting the staff. A clear system of supervision and appraisal is in place. The staff report that this structure is better for them. Managers ensure that all staff enrol on induction programmes when they start working at the school. This includes staff who change roles. The staff then enrol for relevant level 3 qualifications. The staff receive a range of additional training opportunities. These include anti-radicalisation, first aid and safeguarding training. This provides the staff with the skills and knowledge that they need to carry out their roles.

There are good relationships between the parents and carers and the school. Parents and carers say that communication is good. The school runs coffee mornings with guest speakers to encourage parental engagement. These have been successful. Leaders and managers routinely communicate with families, and seek structured

feedback through questionnaires.

The children treat each other with respect. The children undertake work on British values and tolerance. This reinforces the work that the staff do to support the children to manage their behaviour and interactions.

The school council meets regularly. Each meeting begins with consideration of the issues discussed at the previous meeting. This provides a good feedback loop for the council members, reinforcing the view that their opinions are valued.

An independent person undertakes monitoring visits to the school. However, these visits do not include the residential provision that is situated a short distance away from the main school site. As a result, the visits do not monitor the physical condition of the building. This limits the staff members' and managers' awareness of any issues in this building.

## **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 differences 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 whom 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:** SC038324

**Headteacher/Teacher in charge:** Mr Keith Bates

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01603 457480

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## **Inspectors**

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector (lead)  
Deirdra Keating, social care inspector



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