

# Oakfield

Oakfield, Hopewell Road, Hull HU9 4HD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Oakfield School opened in January 2013, and is located in the east of the city of Hull. The school is a maintained special school for up to 67 boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. The school has six residential homes, accommodating up to 34 pupils. Residential pupils stay during term time for a maximum of four nights per week, Monday to Thursday. The school offers flexible support to families and children. The number of nights that residential pupils stay varies according to their individual needs.

**Inspection dates:** 25 to 27 September 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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**Date of previous inspection:** 16 January 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The children's confidence and self-esteem improve as they make excellent progress in all areas of their development.
- The children's anxieties reduce as they enjoy the predictability of the consistent routines.
- The children enjoy excellent relationships with a staff team that knows them well.
- The seamless approach by the home and the school ensures that children's learning is constantly reinforced across the 24-hour curriculum.
- Positive management of risk allows the children to enjoy a range of activities while the staff still ensure their safety.
- The staff team is confident to follow safeguarding procedures to make sure that children are safe.
- The children's behaviour improves due to the positive structure and boundaries.
- The managers are highly ambitious for children to achieve.
- The staff feel very well supported by the management team. They are happy in their work.
- The managers benefit from robust external monitoring from the independent visitor and the school governors.

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

- Keep a clear audit trail of referee contacts in relation to the checks carried out for new staff applications. ('Keeping children safe in education', statutory guidance for schools and colleges, September 2016)

## Inspection judgements

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

The children make exceptional progress, due to the individualised specialist care that they receive. The children's days are well structured. They thrive on this consistent approach, which provides them with the predictable world that they long for. Consequently, the children's anxiety reduces and they make progress in all areas of their development.

The staff offer a very understanding and nurturing approach to supporting the children's complex needs. The staff dedicate their time to understanding each individual. As a result, the children build trusting relationships with the staff and they enjoy their company. One parent commented: 'He has a fantastic relationship with staff, and he has let himself really trust in them.'

The children's physical fitness improves as a result of participating in a range of physical activities on and off the school site. Activities include football, climbing, gym, walking and swimming. The children learn a range of skills to help them to manage their own health. This includes learning about foods and eating a balanced diet, which gives them the skills to make positive choices now and in the future.

The specialist emotional well-being team tailors support to meet the children's specific needs. The children benefit from therapies' such as Lego intervention, anger management, dealing with anxiety and worries, and improving self-esteem'. As a result, the children start to explore their feelings, and their emotional well-being improves. The children benefit from the wider work of the emotional well-being team. They access virtual baby programmes, specialist domestic violence support and sexual health sessions.

The children benefit tremendously from the united approach between the residential service and the school. Reinforcing focused personal targets across the 24-hour curriculum ensures that the children make excellent progress with their education and their social skills. This helps them to develop the ability to transfer their learning and skills between the different settings.

The children's views are central to all aspects of their care. The regular Children's Council meetings enable the children to influence the running of the residential setting. The children actively participate in all aspects of their care planning and contribute to setting their own targets. Consequently, they grow in self-confidence and feel a sense of value and achievement.

The children enjoy an excellent range of activities, such as baking to raise money for charity, spending time with a therapy dog, attending residential camps, doing arts and crafts, and flying kites. Working at the school's allotment is a favoured activity for many of the children. The allotment provides an excellent base for the children to

enjoy the outdoors and learn how to grow their own produce. The children are particularly proud of their unique allotment shed, which they designed and built with architects from London.

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

The staff team is skilled in managing risks to the children. It is quick to identify any potential risk and take immediate action to prevent harm. Risk assessments are working documents, containing regular updates. This enables the positive management of any future risks. The staff manage risk extremely well. This ensures that the children still have maximum opportunity to try new experiences and build on their independence skills while still keeping the children safe.

Incidents of the children going missing from residential care are rare. When the children do go missing, the staff immediately try to locate them and follow procedures to make sure that they are found as quickly as possible.

The staff benefit from a range of training around the wider issues that could affect the children. The staff team has the knowledge to identify risks such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Relationships based around trust and respect promote positive interactions between the children. As a result, there is no bullying.

There is a robust response to any potential safeguarding issues. When necessary, the senior managers consult other professionals, such as the local designated safeguarding officer and social workers, to ensure that the children are kept safe. One professional commented: 'The headteacher consults and seeks advice. I have no issues with safeguarding practice.'

The children feel safe because of the boundaries and predictable responses that they receive from staff. As a result, incidents of challenging behaviour reduce. One parent commented: 'His behaviour has improved so much. They have firm but fair boundaries. They work with me hand-in-hand to help me to manage his behaviour.' The staff know the children extremely well. They quickly pick up cues that the children are becoming distressed and they are able to defuse potentially challenging situations quickly. Consequently, physical intervention is a last resort.

Pre-recruitment checks of new staff ensure that suitable adults care for children. The audit trail used to verify the references of new staff is not clear. This is a recording issue which causes a lack of evidence showing the detailed checks made to ensure that the candidates are suitable for appointment.

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

The managers have extremely high ambitions for children. They ensure that the children's voice is at the heart of all their care planning. As a result, the children feel a sense of value and their confidence improves. One parent commented: 'They have changed my daughter's life so much. They have given her confidence, which has

helped her to engage, and she has made lots of progress.'

The dedicated head of care promotes high expectations of the care that the children receive. He strives for continual improvement. He leads a confident and extremely motivated staff team which mirrors his example.

The staff team is happy at work. All of the staff receive regular supervision. Staff report that management support goes beyond routine sessions, and they can consult with managers at any time. Each member of staff spoken to at the inspection feels that management respects their opinions. This helps staff to feel confident and motivated to make sure that the children receive the very best care. One member of staff commented: 'Every idea you have, they listen to. They give us the chance to put ideas into practice. They keep checking in with you to make sure you are okay. You always feel really valued.'

The managers have rigorous monitoring systems which track the children's progress. This allows the staff to work with the children to create individualised targets. Consequently, each child receives the individualised support that they need to maximise their potential. The governing body and the independent visitor provide robust external oversight. This external scrutiny ensures that managers are aware of issues or areas of development. The managers welcome this challenge to help them to maintain high standards.

New staff benefit from a thorough induction. The induction book for new team members provides them with all the information that they need to settle into their role. Beyond this, it encourages staff to communicate with other staff and key professionals. This helps new staff to understand the role of others and helps them to feel at ease.

The children benefit tremendously from the range of specialist support that they receive at the school. The managers promote a seamless approach by the support teams, school and residential staff. This ensures that children receive a complete package of care which meets their every need. The managers work closely with outside professionals such as social workers and the local designated safeguarding officer. They provide appropriate challenge, where necessary, to make sure that the children are safe and receive the service that they need.

This residential provision is fully meeting its aims and objectives. It is offering a 24-hour curriculum, which is improving the children's development in a very personalised and focused way.

## **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 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:** SC466264

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Rachel Davies

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01482 854 588

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## **Inspector**

Jamie Richardson, social care inspector



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