

# Loxley Hall

Loxley Hall School, Stafford Road, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 8RS  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Loxley Hall school is an academy school, and is part of the Manor Hall Academy Trust. The school offers day and residential placements to boys, aged 11 to 16 years, who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties'. There are 97 pupils on roll, 35 of whom access the residential provision for overnight stays. The school is situated in a rural setting. The main building is a large, two-storey country house, where classrooms, offices, a main kitchen and dining hall are situated. There are two residential houses on the school site, which can provide overnight stays for ten boys at any one time. The residential provision was last inspected in December 2016.

**Inspection dates:** 7 to 9 November 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:** 6 December 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Young people enjoy staying in the residential provision.
- Young people's behaviour improves and they develop some good independence skills.
- Relationships between staff and young people are positive. Staff are positive role models for young people.

- Young people enjoy a wide range of activities with staff. They participate in group activities and individual pursuits.
- Young people learn good self-care skills and staff help young people to adopt a healthy lifestyle.
- Young people feel safe at the school and staff respond well to safeguarding concerns that are raised.
- Staff are trained in behaviour management. Restraints are rare, due to fact that staff use effective de-escalation strategies to calm young people down.
- Staff work well together. They give a consistently high level of care and communication between the staff is strong.
- Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress and development.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The residential provision requires an independent visitor. The independent person from the governing body needs to visit regularly and complete reports that show they have talked to young people.
- Some placement plans lack detail about young people's care needs.
- Some young people's risk assessments do not contain sufficient information about all known risks and the strategies for reducing and managing these risks.
- Records of supervision of staff require improvement.
- Training records do not clearly show which courses the staff have completed.
- Young people's files need to contain the required documentation.

## **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:

- The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. Children are informed who this person is, and how to contact them and they are easily accessible. Children are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, to ring in case of problems or distress. (NMS 2.2)
- All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)
- The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (NMS 6.3)
- The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who is independent of the management of the school, to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the head teacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 20.1)
- 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). (NMS 20.2)

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all young people are able to have a say in the development of residential provision by having some meetings on a Monday evening.
- Ensure that placement plans are sufficiently detailed to help support young people's day-to-day care.
- Ensure that training plans clearly show the courses that staff have completed.

## Inspection judgements

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

Young people enjoy being in residence and make progress in different aspects of their development. Young people recognise the progress that they make. For example, they know that they have developed social skills and learned how to be more independent. Children said: 'I don't swear as much now'; 'My table manners are a lot better and I now help to lay the table and collect the dishes'; and, 'I have learnt how to use a washing machine.' Parents also stated that their children have benefited from being in residence, and said: 'They seem to have learned how to calm down quicker'; and, 'They now seem to accept the word "no" a lot better than they did before staying at the school.'

Young people develop good relationships with the staff. Young people recognise that staff act as good role models for them, often citing the different skills of individual staff as something they aspire to.

Staff seek young people's views by using different forums, such as discussions about their day, regular key-working meetings and termly residential meetings. Staff take account of young people's views. For example, additional activities are now available, young people's meal choices are incorporated into the menus and resources such as a basketball hoop have been bought. Residential meetings take place on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. As a result, those who just stay in residence on a Monday evening are not able to have as great a say in decision-making as other young people.

The provision does not currently have an independent person. Consequently, resident young people are not able to talk to anyone who is independent of the school if they have concerns. Plans are in place to rectify this shortfall, with a proposed visitor attending the school during the inspection. Information regarding both the Children's Commissioner and a children's charity is on the school noticeboard.

Young people are aware of the complaints procedure and how to raise concerns, through information that is around the home and discussions with staff. No issues have been raised by young people since the last inspection.

Communication between the staff in the residential and education provisions is strong. Information is shared at the beginning and end of the school day to make sure that all staff are aware of possible issues. Residential staff offer additional support within the school on a rota basis. This allows staff to be aware of possible difficulties, and to subsequently provide tailored support for those children who need it in the evening.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities in the evenings. They are encouraged to be involved in group activities when they need to develop social skills. Young

people also participate in individual activities if they need time away from the rest of the group. During the inspection, young people enjoyed swimming, pool and golf, as well as a new initiative – a visit from a therapy dog! Young people were able to talk about all of these experiences with enthusiasm, highlighting how much they enjoyed the residential experience.

Staff support the development of young people's independence skills. One parent stated: 'He has started to help more around the house, and it's not such a battle to get him in the shower.' Young people enjoy learning to cook and inspectors observed young people making their own fried-egg sandwiches for breakfast. A new assessment tool for independence skills is being rolled out to see what additional support is necessary.

Young people are supported by a range of health professionals. Medication administration is good and a new controlled-drugs book is in place following a recommendation raised at the last inspection. The school is concentrating on the improvement of mental health awareness, with staff being involved in training to meet this need. A mental health audit tool has been developed to examine the school's ability to respond to these health concerns.

Arrangements for induction into the residential provision are good. Young people say that staff spent time with them explaining the rules and routines. The extended day provision is used well as both an introductory process and for young people who are transitioning from residence as they near the end of their school careers.

Young people's achievements are celebrated, including a 'resident of the week' award as well as birthday celebrations and themed evenings to celebrate different world events. Staff treat young people with dignity and respect, which helps to develop young people's self-esteem and build their emotional resilience.

Staff make sure that parents are regularly contacted about the young people's achievements. Contact between young people and their parents is achieved through telephone calls and parents being invited into school.

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

Young people feel safe within school, with their peers and with the staff team. The school site is a safe environment, with regularly updated checks relating to security, health and safety and fire safety. Effective systems are in place to make sure that bullying behaviour is responded to swiftly. Different risk assessment processes are used to increase the safety of the young people and the staff. Some young people's risk assessments are poor because they are not updated, or not in place at all. This does not fully support young people's safety and well-being.

Young people state that there is always someone that they can talk to in school if they are unhappy or feel unsafe. This includes residential and teaching staff. Safe systems are in place to protect young people when they are using the internet.

Good systems are in place should young people go missing from the residential provision. This has not happened since the last inspection, but staff know what to do should such an incident occur. Security arrangements around both the residential buildings and the school help to decrease possible instances of young people going missing.

The use of behaviour management systems results in more positive behaviour from the young people. A merit system also encourages young people to treat each other with respect. When young people display-challenging behaviours, this is responded to swiftly by staff, who use a range of de-escalation techniques to diffuse the behaviours and calm the young people down. Although staff are trained in restraint, incidents of this being used are rare, with only one restraint since the last inspection. Staff talk to the young people about the effect of their behaviour on others. Sanctions are not used in residence. Monitoring of young people's behaviours shows that following a period in residence their challenging behaviours decrease.

Recruitment procedures make sure that all adults who are working or having unsupervised contact with pupils are safe to do so. Criminal records checks are updated on a regular basis to further support the safety of young people.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training, which increases their awareness of sexual exploitation, neglect and abuse. Procedures are in place and staff know how to respond effectively when concerns are raised. Records show that concerns are taken seriously from differing members of the staff team. Staff liaise well with the local safeguarding board and the designated officer, with information being shared if there are any concerns relating to staff conduct or the welfare of young people. School staff attend all necessary safeguarding meetings to share information and respond to concerns.

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

The school is led by an experienced and enthusiastic senior staff team. The headteacher has changed since the last full residential inspection, although there is still consistency in the management of the senior team. The senior team has high expectations of the residential staff and the young people. Residence is seen as a key part of the young people's school experience, even though young people only stay for one or two evenings a week. A whole-school development plan includes continued improvements in the residential provision, showing that managers are aware of the strengths of the service and areas that they wish to further develop.

Staffing in the residential provision is appropriate. The staff work extremely well together, appear happy in their role and are responsive to the needs of the young people. They are caring and gain mutual support from each other when young people are challenging.

Complaints from parents and other professionals are rare. When these do occur, the staff respond quickly, sharing information where appropriate. The school has responded well to areas for development raised at the last inspection, including the provision of new bedding for young people.

Placement plans for young people vary in their detail and usefulness. Some include information about young people's likes, dislikes and the best ways for staff to respond to young people's behaviour. Other placement plans only include very basic information. Some good information is held within 'pen pictures' that have been written by education staff. This has not been transferred into plans that would support the young people's residential placements. Information regarding children looked after reviews was found to be incorrectly filed and does not support young people's plans for residence.

'Smart targets' are used to develop young people's behaviours and skills. Young people regularly discuss and update their targets by talking with their key workers. Achievable targets help young people to continually improve their behaviour and develop their independence skills.

Staff feel well supported by the management team. Annual appraisals include objectives for individuals' development. This helps them to increase their skills. Although staff report that they are regularly supervised, records of these meetings are not readily available. This would not support staff if they wished to review discussions that they have had with their seniors.

Staff are able to discuss different types of training that they have undertaken both within school and through online courses. They are positive about conferences that they have attended, and about how they have shared information about developing practice from other residential provisions. Training is completed in order to meet the needs of the young people, including recent diabetes awareness. However, training records are not consistently clear about the courses staff have completed, with information being recorded in a number of different areas. This does not give a clear picture of the possible skills of each staff member.

The school's statement of purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the residential provision and how young people are supported. It is reviewed annually to make sure that it is pertinent to the care provided.

The residential areas are homely and well looked after. All areas are clean and young people are encouraged to bring items from home to personalise their rooms. Damage to rooms is quickly responded to.

Monitoring systems are in place, with senior managers examining a range of records to make sure that young people are safe and that staff are following expected care practices. Good peer review visits are completed and there is a local authority visit

completed regularly on an announced basis. These help to support the development of the residential provision. Monitoring by a member of the governing body is not completed regularly and reports do not show that young people's views and those of the staff are being sought. Consequently, staff and young people are not able to share what they think about the residential provision, to inform the governors' view.

## **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:** SC038729

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** David Bownds

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector(s)**

Andrew Hewston, social care inspector (lead)

Dave Carrigan, social care inspector



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