

Wilds Lodge School

Wilds Lodge School, Stamford Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Wilds Lodge School is an independent residential and day school for boys aged between five and 18 with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It currently provides boarding for 64 boys. The school is situated on two sites, several miles from each other. They are both surrounded on all sides by farmland. The accommodation is divided into three boarding areas within the main house and an additional two residential sites, which also include a sports centre and additional facilities. The boys are divided into groups according to their age and vulnerability. Most boys stay in residence between four and five nights a week. The residences are open every other weekend.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 17 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leaders, managers and staff are aspirational for the young people in their care. They want them to achieve to their highest potential, despite their previous experiences. Young people make extremely positive progress from their starting points.
- There is a seamless transition between care and education. Young people benefit from a wraparound 24-hour curriculum. Extremely close working between care and education staff ensures that there is continuity and consistency for young people.
- The opportunities, facilities and resources available to young people are exceptional, helping to ensure that young people have every opportunity to meet their potential and prepare for independence.
- Young people benefit from an extremely high-quality environment. Both education and boarding provisions are furnished to a very high standard. This helps young people to understand that they are valued.
- Investment in the training and development of staff is excellent. Members of staff speak highly of the support that they receive. Staff say that there is high morale and they feel valued.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Further medical information should be sought in relation to young people who have health difficulties. This will enable leaders, managers and staff to fully assess the potential impact on young people, for example, when staff use physical intervention.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that medical advice is sought to inform practice when a child has an underlying health condition. (Linked to NMS 3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

All young people consulted with during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. They said: 'Things have got 100% better for me since coming here. It's so beneficial me being here. It's taught me so much. I don't want to leave.' The vast majority of parents, carers and professionals were also highly positive, describing the immense progress their child has made, and the positive impact that this has had on their home lives.

Young people benefit from really high-quality, individualised and aspirational care. They are given every opportunity to reach their potential. They have excellent experiences. Spending time in the residential provision particularly benefits them academically, socially and emotionally.

Young people thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. They make significant progress in relation to their starting points. For example, there are a number of young people whose levels of anxiety have reduced as a result of the direct support that they receive to understand their emotions. This has led to a reduction in conflict between peers, as young people better understand how to communicate socially. Young people benefit from highly effective work around peer relationships and social skills. They go on to have a greater understanding of their own needs, including their emotional needs.

The education and care that young people receive is enhanced by the resources available to them and the opportunities they have. Young people like all the activities that they take part in, which are planned in consultation with young people. They participate in a range of activities on-site and in the community, such as cooking and crafts, going to the local supermarket, going swimming, trampolining, exploring local nature areas, going to see football matches and other sports activities. These opportunities further enhance their confidence and their skills in social interaction, thereby helping their social and emotional development.

Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. Young people told the inspectors how they feel respected by staff, and that this feeling is reciprocal. These high-quality relationships, and continuity of care, are a priority for staff. Even when they are struggling, young people still feel safe enough to express their feelings.

Children have a voice. Young people's views are frequently sought informally through conversations with staff, or through the school council. Recently, a suggestions box has been installed in each of the residences. Young people know their views are valued. As a result, they feel confident that their views are being listened to and any comments they make will be acted on.

Young people's individual needs are known and well understood by care staff, who take the time to nurture and encourage their individual skills and likes. This helps to ensure that young people feel secure and confident in the nurturing residential environment. Transitions at all points of young people's school lives are managed well. For some young people, transitions and change can be difficult to manage. Systems for transition into the residential provision help to promote young people's confidence. All young people consulted with during the inspection spoke about the preparation and planning that goes into making them feel at ease during big transitions, such as moving to a new residence building.

Opportunities for enhancing independence skills are integrated into the school and residence day. For example, young people assist with laundry, help to clear the tables at mealtimes and keep their bedrooms tidy. Tasks such as these help them to prepare for adult life, while having fun. Older young people are encouraged to be as independent as possible, and they respond really well to the added responsibility.

Plans for the care of young people have clear aims and targets, and are closely linked to their educational targets. Individual health needs are well met, including liaison with health professionals where needed. The administration of medication is safe. Opportunities for young people to take part in fun, energetic activities are maximised for the benefit of their health and well-being. For example, young people love to kick a football around or play 'Tig' in the school grounds. Young people benefit from nutritious and plentiful home-cooked food. Close liaison with catering staff helps to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge to support young people to enjoy healthy lifestyles.

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

Young people told the inspectors that they feel safe and know how to contact trusted members of staff, should they need to. Young people are kept safe and are protected. They enjoy attending residential care and are happy while they are there. There are strong relationships with care staff, who have an ethos of, and create an atmosphere of, nurture and fun, while ensuring that young people know and understand appropriate boundaries. Young people did not report bullying to be an issue. Discriminatory and bullying behaviour is challenged. There is promotion of equality and diversity, and this is part of the everyday ethos.

Care staff are well trained and understand how to follow safeguarding and child protection procedures where necessary. They have a clear understanding of how to whistleblow, should they become concerned about the safety of a young person. Safeguarding young people is given a high priority. A safe atmosphere is created where young people can air their worries. They know that they will be listened to. Safeguarding and child protection systems are further enhanced by positive relationships with local authority social workers, and the designated officer for safeguarding within the local authority. Safe recruitment systems and monitoring of visitors ensure that children and young people are protected, as far as possible, from contact with unsuitable people.

The senior leadership team has identified areas of safeguarding practice that could be further strengthened to enhance the already good safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Following an allegation made against a member of staff, senior staff reviewed their allegations management response and identified areas for improvement. Since then, the process of managing allegations has improved. Senior leaders and managers continue to keep safeguarding processes under review. This demonstrates a commitment to improve safeguarding practice within residence for the benefit of young people.

Young people know how to complain and, although they have raised no complaints since the last inspection, they are confident they would be listened to if they did. Safeguarding systems are further enhanced by visits from the independent visitor. This system provides additional monitoring and provides further opportunities for young people's views to be heard. Staff demonstrate a clear awareness of young people's individual vulnerabilities and potential risks. This is supported by risk assessments that are well implemented in practice. This means that risk is minimised. However, a shortfall was identified in a young person's risk assessment. Advice has not been sought from a medical practitioner in relation to a young person's medical condition. It is particularly important that staff understand all risks to that young person and whether practice needs to be altered, particularly if, for example, physical intervention is ever used to help keep the young person and others safe.

Behaviour is very well managed. Staff and young people do not dwell on poor behaviour but look at the positives, and consider how the situation can be prevented next time. Leaders and managers monitor incidents well. Young people benefit immensely from morning and afternoon house meetings. In the morning, individual daily targets are set and in the afternoon, boarders review their day together, reflecting on any challenges and identifying positives. This approach reflects the school's therapeutic ethos and the positive high regard young people and staff are encouraged to have for each other.

Health and safety requirements are well met. Regular maintenance and building and fire safety checks protect young people, visitors and staff. Young people understand fire safety and have the opportunity to take part in regular practice fire evacuations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential provision is extremely well managed and is led by an experienced and qualified staff team. Managers, leaders and staff have extremely high expectations and aspirations for young people. Attendance at the residential provision benefits young people's academic, social and emotional progress. Care and education staff work together seamlessly across the school and residence for the benefit of young people. A young person said: 'I trust the staff. They always have time for you. They really do care.'

The senior leadership team, including the school's principal and head of care, aspires to develop a school and residential provision that is the best it can be. It is achieving this and is constantly looking at how to develop the school and residential provision further, for the benefit of young people. For instance, a change in the grouping of age groups across the residential provision has resulted in fewer transitions across sites for students. A brand new theatre, music room and recording studio will further enhance the resources and opportunities available for students.

Monitoring systems are highly effective. The independent visitor visits half termly and provides challenge and scrutiny, helping to ensure that leaders and managers are accountable for their actions. Monitoring by leaders is robust, ensuring that excellent standards are maintained. This system creates opportunities for further learning and development through the actions identified and demonstrates sustained improvement over a period of time. Managers and leaders are enthusiastic for positive change and development and have clear strategic plans for the future.

There was strong feedback from young people about how supportive and respectful the care staff are. Care staff are immensely proud of young people and of the work they do. Staff benefit from a good range of training and development opportunities and are supported effectively by supervisory systems. Staff confirm that they can suggest their own ideas about how to improve the residential provision further and they are encouraged to consider training opportunities that will further enhance their roles. The majority of parents and carers confirm communication from care staff is very good and is individual to each family. Highly positive feedback was received throughout the inspection from the majority of stakeholders, parents and carers consulted.

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: SC069231

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Robin Lee

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Inspector(s)

Catherine Honey, social care inspector (lead)

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