

Hunters Hill (Residential) School

Hunters Hill School, Spirehouse Lane, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 1QD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Hunters Hill is a residential special school. It is maintained by Birmingham City Council and is situated on the south side of the city. The school is split across two sites and has five residential properties. The school caters for 132 pupils, with a capacity for 52 residential placements. It accommodates boys from 11 to 16 years old. The school has pupils who have been diagnosed with ADHD, autistic spectrum disorder and Asperger's Syndrome.

The residential provision was last inspected in December 2016.

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 January 2018

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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 5 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Young people are good ambassadors for the school and show others all the great features of the residential service.
- The residential service is a welcoming and vibrant place in which young people develop life skills and meet important milestones.
- Young people are able to access activities that help them stay fit and healthy.
- Irrespective of young people's background, culture or age, everyone feels valued and shows kindness towards each other.
- Residential staff ensure that any type of bullying is swiftly tackled and that initiatives and strategies are implemented to help to improve behaviour and to increase young people's awareness.
- Everyone involved in the school plays a role in ensuring that young people are protected from harm. This includes staff being confident in areas of child protection and having the knowledge and skills to keep young people safe.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Managers do not always ensure that records hold all the required information.
- Policies and risk assessments are not always kept up to date to provide staff with clear advice.
- Quick action is not always taken when a concern is raised about the residential environment.
- Quality assurance reports do not hold sufficient detail to show how the overall effectiveness of care improves young people's lives.
- The school's website does not contain all required information.
- Not all staff have received training in autistic spectrum disorder.
- Young people's opinions and views are not always recorded in care plans.

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:

- Ensure that the issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate. (national minimum standard 13.9)
- Ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children. (national minimum standard 19.1)

Recommendations

- Ensure that all records of significant events accurately reflect actions taken by staff and managers and that they record the outcomes for young people.
- Ensure that all care planning includes the views and opinions of young people.
- Ensure that all policies and risk assessments are up to date and give clear guidance to staff.
- Ensure that information on the school's website is brought up to date.
- Ensure that quick action is taken when a concern is raised about the residential environment.
- Ensure that the quality assurance report holds sufficient detail to show how the overall effectiveness of care improves young people's lives.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people's time at the residential service plays an important part in improving their emotional and physical well-being. Every young person's stay creates new opportunities for them to develop life skills and to participate in well-coordinated activities.

Irrespective of young people's backgrounds, culture or age, everyone feels valued and shows kindness towards each other. This mutual respect creates a sense of family, with each young person feeling like a valued member.

Residential care staff deal sensitively with young people's needs and concerns. Information is displayed throughout the residential service, with advice on where to get help. This gives young people the required knowledge about all the available support.

Young people enjoy spending time with staff and friends and learning about topics such as the environment. Teachers spend time in the residential service and use the more relaxed environment to bring in learning that is more informal. This includes the young people learning about the world around them. For example, an unplanned discussion took place about recycling and sparked interest in the young people, who asked lots of questions.

Young people are ambassadors for the school and model exceptionally good behaviour. Young people know that bullying is not tolerated. There are visual displays around the different houses that help to remind young people of the expectations of the school.

Parents speak positively about the impact that residential stays have on their child's life. One parent told an inspector, 'The residential service has really developed my son's social skills. To help my son to settle, they allow him to bring in any personal items from home. I would give the residential service 110%. My son has come on so far due to the support he has received.'

Although young people told inspectors that they feel listened to, and get to attend meetings, their views and opinions are not formally recorded. For example, the student council meeting record fails to show that young people's views are acted on. Young people's care plans do not detail the young person's views and opinions about their care. As a result, records fail to show the voice of the child.

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

Young people, including the most vulnerable, all feel safe when they stay at the residential service.

Leaders and managers ensure that allegations or suspicions of harm are promptly referred to the right professionals. However, there are inconsistencies in how staff maintain records. This makes auditing the actions of members of staff sometimes challenging.

Leaders and managers carefully plan the residential groups for each night. They take into account young people's ages, interests, abilities and behaviours. This careful planning means that young people build strong friendships and value the evening time, spent with people they trust and respect.

Staff ensure that procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication result in all young people receiving all their prescription medication in line with their doctors' instructions.

Regular health and safety checks help to ensure that young people live in a safe environment. Young people get to know what to do in the event of a fire through regular drills.

Leaders and managers follow the Department for Education guidance around 'keeping children safe in education'. This results in new staff to the school being safely recruited and vetted.

Staff practice is centred on keeping young people safe. This means that staff are alert to the dangers that young people can face from going missing from school, child sexual exploitation, gang affiliation, criminality or self-harm. The practice deployed by the staff means that the welfare of young people is always the most important consideration. Consequently, during young people's stays, the staff ensure that these risks are minimised.

Staff are trained in behaviour management. Staff have good insight and this leads to a sensitive response to young people's anxieties and triggers for their behaviour. Levels of physical intervention have significantly reduced. This success is to the credit of staff, who have developed excellent de-escalation skills. However, record-keeping is weak and fails to give the full details of the different steps taken by staff. This in turn limits senior management overview of staff practice.

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

There have been some significant changes within the leadership team. During this period of change, there has been a lack of managerial oversight regarding the quality of records. This has prevented the senior leadership team from being able to reflect on practice and to determine any future learning.

Shortfalls in records extend to risk assessments and policies. For example, policies are missing for religious, dietary, language and cultural needs. The website does not contain all of the necessary information. The headteacher is aware of this and has a

target date of February to ensure that all information is in place.

Although staff have training in physical restraint and the 'Prevent' strategy, they do not have training around autistic spectrum disorder and how to keep young people safe from child sexual exploration. This shows that there has been a missed opportunity in being able to enhance staff practice.

An independent visitor regularly attends the residential service. However, there is a lack of detail in the evaluation of the effectiveness of care provided. This creates a missed opportunity to use evaluation to drive forward improvement.

The head of care has worked hard to meet the recommendations made at the last inspection. Staff receive regular supervision and say that they feel supported in their everyday roles. Staff also comment that they feel supported by the leadership team, managers and each other. One member of staff told one inspector, 'The team are amazing.'

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: SC043050

Headteacher/teacher in charge: The Rev Mr Andrew Lomas

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Louise Battersby, social care inspector (lead)

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