

# Windlestone School

Chilton, Ferryhill, Co Durham DL17 0HP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential special school for 80 children and young people aged from 11 to 16 years who have social and/or emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The school also manages a Personal Alternative Curriculum Centre for 40 children and young people who need additional support. There are two residential units that provide accommodation for up to 20 children and young people. The school also offers extended stays to all pupils, should they wish to participate in after-school activities. This modern school is located in a semi-rural location and it homes a small farm in the school grounds.

**Inspection dates:** 9 to 11 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:** 21 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children and young people receive good individualised support that impacts positively on their progress and improves outcomes. Their relationships with the staff, and with each other, are very good.
- The children and young people are consulted and listened to. They are treated with dignity and respect. The staff actively promote high levels of equality and diversity.
- The children and young people are safe and their welfare is positively promoted. All aspects of health and safety are comprehensively managed. The staff team is skilled in positively managing behaviours.
- The headteacher and senior managers lead a committed, motivated staff team whose members put the children and young people at the heart of their practice. Parents are very well supported. Partnership working with other professionals is meaningful and effective.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The statement of purpose is not easily accessible to the staff or parents. In addition, there is no format available for the children and young people that is appropriate to their age and their understanding.
- The children's and young people's individual risk assessments do not fully set out their known risks, or how these will be reduced.

## **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 for residential special schools:

- 1.1 A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the Statement of Purpose is available to parents and staff, is made known to children through an appropriate method of communication and is seen to work in practice. The statement describes the overall purpose of the school and describes any theoretical or therapeutic model underpinning the practice of the school. It also explains the ethos and philosophy of the school, and provides an outline of provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the individual risk assessments for the children and young people set out their individual needs and how these will be met.

## Inspection judgements

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

The children and young people enjoy their residential stays and they have very positive day-to-day experiences. The quality of the care and support that they receive is good. All of the children and young people are progressing and achieving. The staff nurture trusting relationships with the children and young people, which develops positive attachments and feelings of emotional security.

A social worker said: 'The residential provision has been very positive for my young person and for his family. Having a break is very important and this has improved relationships at home. The school are extremely flexible, which supports this family. My young person enjoys his residential stays, and they are having a positive effect on him.'

The children and young people respond positively to the routines and boundaries that are put in place by the staff. This offers stability and helps the children and young people to improve their social skills. The staff teach the children and young people how to develop their empathy skills, with good results. The children and young people do have age-appropriate disagreements, but they also show kindness and consideration towards each other. Consequently, they are developing positive friendships and learning about tolerance.

A parent said: 'All I can tell you about the residential is strengths and all positives. It is absolutely brilliant. The staff are very supportive and my son is learning about boundaries, and that is really helping with his behaviours. He is making friends, and he loves to go there. There is nothing bad that I can tell you. It is a great place.'

The children and young people's academic achievements have improved since they began their residential stays. Attendance is much better, and having a good night's sleep before school is helping with their concentration and ability to learn.

Activities are a very positive feature. All the children and young people that were consulted during this inspection highlighted that the activities are one of the best things about staying in residential. The children and young people choose what activities they would like to take part in. They are encouraged to develop individual hobbies that they can continue when they are at school. This supports the children's and young people's aspirations and gives them positive options for their free time to encourage them from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

A young person said: 'We get to do lots of things here, more than I get to do when I am at home. I think activities are the best thing about residential. We get to go on trips, and do the things that we like to do. I have learned how to do lots of new things since coming here, this is a really good place to be.'

The children and young people's healthcare needs, including their psychological and

emotional needs, are met. The school has recently secured regular input from a school nurse who is providing a weekly 'drop-in service' for the children and young people. She is also leading a range of health promotion activities that teach the children and young people about how to live a healthy lifestyle. The school has also secured funding to employ a part-time educational psychologist who will support the children and young people who have emotional difficulties. This is a positive move forwards to improve healthcare outcomes.

The school nurse commented: 'Overall, I think the school is very proactive and it really engages and pushes forward positive changes. This is one of the best schools that I go to. In my opinion this is a really positive environment for the students.'

Transitions for the children and young people who are new at the school and to having residential stays are very well planned and tailored towards each child and young person's individual needs. Similarly, transitional arrangements are very positive for the young people who are leaving. This helps the children and young people to adapt to significant changes in their lives.

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

The children and young people are safe while they are in school and having their residential stays. All the staff receive regular child protection training, and they know what to do if they are worried or concerned about a child or young person. The headteacher has good links with the designated officer who provides advice and guidance to ensure that the children and young people's welfare is promoted.

The designated officer said: 'I have a very good relationship with the school and they will contact me for advice and guidance. They are very open to any suggestions I make or any advice that I gave.'

The staff manage behaviour positively by using guidance, encouragement and a range of incentives and rewards. They are positive role models and they use a range of restorative interventions to help the children and young people to understand how their, sometimes negative, behaviours can impact on those around them.

A young person said: 'The staff here are fair, and they talk to us about our behaviours and stuff. We all have a mentor, and that is the person you can talk to. I like coming here, I like all the staff and they really help you.'

There have been no restraints carried out within the residential unit since the last inspection. Feedback from parents includes a number of examples where the children and young people's behaviours have significantly improved at home, as a direct result of the support and positive behaviour management that is carried out in the residential unit.

A parent said: '[Name] really enjoys it at residential and it has done him good. The best thing about residential is that he is much better behaved at home, and we have

a much better relationship. The staff are very good at keeping me up to date, and I can ring them any time. I have no concerns at all, it has been really good for my son to have residential.'

There have been no incidents of children or young people going missing during their residential stays, and none are at risk from exploitation, radicalisation or extremism. The school has very good links with the local police, who share the school's ethos to avoid criminalising children and young people.

A local policeman said: 'I have been the local officer for the school for three years, and I have visited the school in a number of occasions. Part of my role is to look at restorative work and early intervention to support young people who are at risk of becoming involved in criminalising behaviours. I am very impressed with the school. They are receptive to any ideas and they are good at looking at a range of solutions to support the pupils. The number of pupils going missing have significantly reduced, which is positive. We don't have any major problems within the community, or with the school.'

All aspects of health and safety, including fire safety, are comprehensively managed to keep the children, young people, the staff and visitors to the school safe. Regular safety checks on staff are carried out and all visitors to the school are checked and vetted. These measures ensure that the children and young people are not exposed to unsuitable adults.

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

The headteacher is an experienced teacher and a strong leader. He is supported by a motivated management team. Together they demonstrate that they have high aspirations for the children and young people. All the staff employed in the school and the residential unit are committed to improving the lives of the children and young people in their care, and they actively promote equality and diversity within their teaching and support roles. This approach respects the children and young people and offers them a range of positive experiences.

Since the last inspection the previous head of care has retired. The school has tried to recruit a replacement. However, due to unforeseen circumstances the successful candidate was unable to take up the head of care position. Interim arrangements have been made whereby an experienced staff member has accepted the post of temporary head of care. This arrangement has provided management stability within the residential unit.

The residential staff feel very well supported and valued. They receive regular, meaningful, supervision and a yearly appraisal. The staff feel that they are involved in their own progression and professional development, and that their views and opinions are important.

All the staff receive the training that they need to carry out their role, and staff morale is very good. The positive attitudes of the staff is reflected in their day-to-day practice, which provides a happy environment for the children and young people.

A member of staff said; 'We are a good team and we get on really well. This is important because if the young people see us being happy then they are happy. I do this job for the young people, it is where I want to be and I would not want to work anywhere else. I feel valued, and I really value the staff who work with me.'

The school has a range of monitoring systems, which include regular visits by an independent person. The outcomes from the internal and external monitoring are shared with the board of governors, who work with the headteacher to improve the school's performance and the outcomes for the children and young people.

The headteacher and the staff work extremely well with external professionals and other service providers. This provides the children and young people with access to a range of external support services, which enhances the care and the support that they receive from the school. Leaders and managers and the staff also have extremely good relationships with parents and carers. They offer high levels of support, advice, and guidance that contributes to improved outcomes for the children, young people and their families.

The school has progressed by addressing the shortfalls identified in the previous inspection to improve the children and young people's residential plans, and to improve some aspects of how medication is administered. This way of working continually drives improvement.

The school has failed to meet a national minimum standard by not having a statement of purpose readily available to parents and to the staff. Additionally, there is no information available to the children and young people that sets out the services offered within the school and the residential provision. An area for improvement is also highlighted from this inspection, which is to improve how the children and young people's individual risk assessments fully demonstrate that all measures are taken to reduce known risks.

## **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:** SC007615

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Tim Bennett

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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**Inspector:**

Debbie White, social care inspector (lead)



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