

Springfield House School

Springfield House School, Kenilworth Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands B93 0AJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Springfield House School is a maintained school operated by Birmingham City Council. It is a residential community special school for boys and girls aged 4 to 11 with a range of special educational needs. The majority of children have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Some children have learning difficulties and some are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders. The school currently has 96 pupils and is open on weekdays in term time only. The school is in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull, and can accommodate 17 children in The Lodge.

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 13 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Leaders and managers have not taken sufficient action to address four previously raised breaches in national minimum standards. Consequently, these national minimum standards remain unmet.
- The quality of the food available to children in the residential provision continues to be of a poor standard. Children and staff describe the quality of food served as 'inedible'.
- Managers do not ensure that children and residential care staff are debriefed following a physical intervention.
- The school's complaints policy is not accessible and child-focused.
- Residential care staff feel devalued and report a lack of support from senior leaders.
- Residential care staff have not receive any formal supervision or appraisals since September 2017.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Children enjoy their residential experiences, especially being able to participate in a wide range of activities that help them to improve their self-esteem and develop friendships.
- Residential care staff work tirelessly to provide a nurturing and caring environment for every child.
- Residential care staff build and maintain positive relationships with children.
- Residential care staff have good insight into the children's backgrounds and family circumstances.
- Residential care staff continue to work in partnership with professionals and families to promote the welfare and safety of every child.

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:

- All children, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals, which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety. (National minimum standard 8.1)
- All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (National minimum standard 12.5)
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (National minimum standard 12.6)
- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary. (National minimum standard 13.1)
- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. (National minimum standard 13.2)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (National minimum standard 13.4)
- The school's leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils. (National minimum standard 13.5)
- All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (National minimum standard 19.6)

Recommendations

- Ensure that there is a suitable and age-appropriate complaints procedure in place that is accessible for children. This will enable children to make an independent complaint without the support of an adult.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children have the opportunity to stay at the residential provision usually for one or two nights a week. They make good progress across a range of areas, including developing friendships, improving their self-esteem and learning life skills.

Residential care staff know the needs and vulnerabilities of each child in their care. Most children's care plans are up to date and are regularly reviewed by the staff. Residential care staff ensure that children have access to additional services they might require to help improve their outcomes. For example, staff have secured the help of pet therapy and music therapy and have made sure that children can access speech and language services.

Children have the opportunity when necessary to keep in touch with family and friends. This ability to maintain communication with family enables them to feel secure.

Children participate in a range of creative activities that help to develop their life skills and to improve their overall learning. For example, during the inspection children participated in a game of treasure hunt. This helped to support their visual and sensory experiences. One child told the inspector, 'The treasure hunt was fab and can't wait for the next part.'

The residential provision requires modernisation. Due to time constraints, the residential care staff report that they are unable to update notice boards to celebrate children's progress. Inspectors observed that the displays in the dining room and in the corridors were the same as those seen at a previous inspection.

Children have a full range of equipment and games to enable them to have a fun experience during their residential stays. Children confirm that they like their bedrooms. Residential care staff work hard to ensure that children's bedrooms are personalised. One child new to the residential service said: 'They let me bring my silky blanket.' This enabled her to feel secure and at ease on her first night at the residential provision.

Residential care staff feel that there is a lack of investment and value from senior leaders towards the residential service. This has affected staff morale. Residential care staff are frustrated and tired of reporting that they have little time available to them to plan activities and maintain essential records. Residential care staff are concerned about the direct impact on children's experiences and the quality of care. Despite this, staff remain passionate and dedicated in their efforts to try to make the children's residential experience positive.

Residential care staff listen to the wishes and feelings of children. However, children's views are not always recorded and therefore do not provide an accurate

account of the child's residential journey and experience. Despite this being raised at the last inspection, the current complaints policy and procedure is still not accessible for children. This restricts the opportunity for children to make an independent complaint without the support of an adult.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Residential care staff ensure that children have individual risk assessments that help to identify risks and offer all staff guidance for managing behaviours. The school's missing-child policy was only updated during this inspection, despite the issue being raised at the last inspection. There have been no incidents of children going missing from residential provision. Training and procedures are in place to support all staff to recognise situations when children are at risk of harm, including exploitation, neglect, abuse, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation.

Residential care staff only use physical intervention as a last resort to manage the children's challenging behaviour. However, the systems for monitoring the records of physical interventions are weak. This means that the concerns raised at the last inspection have still not been addressed. As a result, senior managers still do not review these records to identify trends and patterns and to ensure that all staff apply a consistent approach. Despite staff receiving training, records continue to lack the necessary detail, reflection and evaluation. At present, the children and the residential care staff are not receiving debriefings following a physical intervention to ensure that staff practice is reviewed, and that children can raise comments.

Recruitment records demonstrate compliance with safe recruitment practice. This practice supports the prevention of unsafe adults working with children.

Parents and carers and professionals have no concerns about the children's safety. An independent person visits the residential provision routinely. This provides children with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with an independent person with whom they can share concerns.

Medication is administered safely, and the recording of prescribed and non-prescribed medicines is effective. Residential care staff receive appropriate training to ensure that they can respond appropriately to any child's health needs.

The environment in the residential provision is physically safe. Regular health and safety checks, alongside routine servicing of equipment and risk assessments, help to make sure that the residential provision is safe for children, staff and visitors. Fire drills are regularly completed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The overall leadership and management of residential provision are inadequate. The leadership response to address breaches in national minimum standards identified in the previous inspection is poor and consequently four standards are still not met.

Senior leaders have failed to make sufficient improvement in the provision of food served to children. Despite concerns raised regarding the quality of the food and catering arrangements at the previous inspection, there has been further decline in the standard of food being served to children. Staff and visitors describe the food as, 'inedible and appalling'. Children have therefore developed a culture of reluctantly tasting a small amount of food, before agreeing to accept a full portion. Inspectors observed this practice during the inspection. One child described the food as 'slop'. A number of stakeholders who have observed and tasted the food have said: 'I would not give this food to my own children'. To compensate for the poor quality of food, the residential care staff often purchase additional food for the children from their own money. Children are not going hungry only as a direct result of the residential care staff intervention. The pace of progress by senior leaders is too slow. There is now an urgent need for rapid improvement in the quality of food served to children.

During the inspection, four key stakeholders expressed serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of the senior leadership team. They described staff morale as being 'low', resulting in a 'lack of enthusiasm'. Residential care staff say that there is a lack of support and investment from the senior leadership. One member of the residential staff said 'they don't care'.

Senior leaders have not prioritised the development and supervision of residential care staff since the last inspection. As a result, residential care staff have not received any formal supervision or appraisal since September 2017. This shortfall in practice has led to low staff morale. There is a lack of opportunity to celebrate success and, when necessary, to address poor practice.

Residential care staff are tired, 'stretched' and have little time for administrative tasks and essential record keeping. Residential care staff say that there is not enough time set aside for the consistent sharing of information. Staff are concerned that lack of time for care planning has a direct impact on the quality of care provided to children. Staff meetings take place, but they do not sufficiently consider the progress of children and the development of residential care staff. One stakeholder told inspectors, 'members of staff who presented as highly motivated in September are presenting as being depressed.'

The new executive headteacher has acknowledged the shortfalls raised at the previous inspection and at this inspection. She has introduced an extensive action

plan to start to make the required improvements in the quality of children's experiences in the residential provision.

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: SC042411

Executive Headteacher: Miss Kay Reid

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Lisa Walsh, social care inspector (lead)
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