

The Robert Ogden School

10 Thurnscoe Hall Mews High Street, Thurnscoe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 0ST

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The Robert Ogden School is an independent school managed by the National Autistic Society (NAS). The school has capacity for 127 children who have special educational needs and are between the ages of five and 19, and who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). There are currently 98 children on roll and 12 of these use the residential provision, which is split over two sites, Thurnscoe House and Thurnscoe Studios. The house has a ground-floor flat built on the side with separate access for one pupil. In total, 10 pupils can board on any one night, six in the house and another four in the studios. Currently, six pupils board for four nights a week from Monday to Thursday and another six are flexible boarders.

The school uses the Structure, Positive approaches and expectations, Empathy, Low arousal, Links (SPELL) framework developed by the NAS to understand and support pupils who have ASD. This framework also underpins the autism-specific training that all staff receive. All pupils have an individual education, health and care (EHC) plan.

At the same time as this inspection, Ofsted completed an inspection of the school's education provision. There is a separate report for this inspection.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 March 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 **good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 12 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Residential pupils receive high standards of care and benefit from a safe and nurturing living environment.
- Staff are well trained so that they are highly empathetic to the pupils' individual needs and provide the pupils with the consistency, structure and stability that they need.
- Care plans are tailored so that pupils receive the support they need to develop their potential.
- Outcomes for pupils are good; they make good progress and are able to pursue further education. Their social skills, independence and self-esteem all improve.
- Pupils behave well and their attendance at school is good.
- Close supervision from staff and a protective environment keep pupils safe.
- Staff promote pupils' views and opinions, which are acted on.
- Strong leadership of the residential settings contributes to a process of continuous improvement and maintaining high levels of support for pupils.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and how well their children are supported.
- The residential provision provides significant added value to pupils' experiences and progress.
- There is an effective approach to integrating the care and education of pupils.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Develop the level of governance by the proprietor with regard to improving: the professional challenge of the designated safeguarding leads; safeguarding processes and decision-making; staff safeguarding training; risk assessments; and the quality of half-termly monitoring reports (NMS13).
- Produce a summary of each pupil's individual needs to promote staff understanding of care plans, aims and objectives (NMS 22).

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The residential provision gives vulnerable pupils who have complex needs a nurturing and safe environment to live in. The high standard of care is an important part of their lives, whether pupils stay for short breaks or board from Monday to Friday.

Staff are well trained so that they are highly empathetic to the pupils' individual needs. Pupils clearly benefit from this and are happy and safe, and enjoy normal teenage experiences. Pupils receive care from experienced staff, who are knowledgeable about ASD. The staff are skilled in providing bespoke packages of care specifically tailored to the pupils' diverse needs. Consequently, pupils know how their day is structured and what to expect, which minimises any uncertainties and promotes their full engagement.

All parents and social workers consulted are very positive about the way pupils are looked after and feel fully informed about their progress. This is a typical comment from a parent: 'Excellent school with skilled and caring staff. My child has respite boarding and it is exemplary, well run with experienced staff. I recommend this school to all families with children with severe autism and complex needs.' Parents particularly like the link books, which are detailed diaries and a way of communicating between the residential settings, school and parents. These are very informative about the day-to-day lives of pupils, which is especially important when pupils have communication difficulties.

Pupils use their time constructively, benefiting from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance framework and pathway to independence programmes. They develop a broad range of life-skills to support their transition to adulthood and further education. There is plenty of photographic evidence that pupils can keep that reflects their journey through school. This shows how pupils both acquire new skills and have a lot of fun at the same time. Pupils develop their social skills, become more tolerant of group living and become more confident as a result.

Pupils' learning is assessed, certificated and links directly to targets and outcomes in EHC plans. Staff take considerable steps to ensure that the learning of practical life-skills is tailored to the new curriculum in school. This contributes to the way that residential care and education are thoroughly integrated. Overall, there is significant added value from the residential provision to the school.

Parents are really positive about the progress pupils make and frequently point out that staff know their children well and are very effective in how they support them. This includes the admissions process and support when pupils move on to college. Parents commented: 'The progress he has made in such a short time has been amazing. Having never been in an educational setting, his transition from the home environment was coordinated with him at the centre and my input as a parent was always given much respect. I felt the staff worked with us and together we all made

this as easy as possible for him,' and 'My child is leaving at 19 years, but school is really helping with transition to a new college, liaising and organising visits.'

Pupils' health needs are promoted and there are systematic medication arrangements in place. Combined with the range of expertise from staff in school, pupils' complex needs are well met through meticulous planning and assessment. Pupils benefit from care staff who are part of a holistic and child-centred culture. Care files are organised and contain a highly complex set of information about pupils' needs and care plans. However, this information is not routinely summarised, and busy staff vary in their ability to describe current programmes for individual pupils.

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

Overall, there is a positive culture of safe care. Consequently, pupils who reside at Thurnscoe House or Studios as part of their placement at Robert Ogden School are safe. In accordance with their individually assessed needs, children are kept under close supervision in a protective environment by adults who know them well, and this is the primary means of keeping them safe. As a result, there are no missing episodes and no instances of pupils being at risk of sexual exploitation, although staff could be better trained on their understanding of the risk of exploitation.

Pupils feel safe and secure. This is a result of the caring and nurturing staff who understand the pupil's complex needs. The physical, emotional and sensory environments and competent staff practice avoid known triggers that upset pupils, and reduce pupils' anxiety levels. Parents frequently commented that staff do this really well because they understand the pupils and their complex needs. For example, one parent commented: 'The school is very transparent with policies and procedures and does not shy away from any difficult issues, always putting their vulnerable young people first. Again, I cannot praise the staff enough, always adapting and following my son's needs and interests.'

Staff are trained in behaviour management. The emphasis of the chosen techniques is on prevention and distraction, and the use of physical restraint is minimal. There is good internal management oversight of staff practice that ensures that any use of restraint is safe and appropriate.

The process for making complaints and for dealing with them is made clear to the pupils, who each have their own individualised guide to complaining. The system has been used occasionally by some pupils to resolve complications involved in meeting their individual assessed needs in a communal living setting. None of the complaints relate to children's safety.

E-safety is a recognised priority. A good range of control measures are in place. These mitigate the risks to pupils who are vulnerable to the potential dangers of social media because they can operate the technology without recognising the possible threat of interacting with others on the internet, for instance on online gaming sites. Practical measures include filters on the school's server and wi-fi

systems, and written agreements with pupils on their use of devices, suitable to their age and understanding. Risky incidents of e-safety have occurred but have been detected by the school, and addressed through an effective, red-amber-green-rated risk-management system.

Recruitment processes, including the vetting and decision-making about which staff to appoint, is thorough and contributes towards keeping pupils free from harm.

The physical environment is well maintained and there are thorough systems for promoting the health and safety of pupils. Individual risk assessments about pupils' vulnerabilities are clear and inform staff practice. Although the scoring system on the risk-assessment format is flawed and weighted inappropriately towards outcomes of medium risk, this is not having an impact on the safety of pupils. This is a different risk assessment process to the one used for e-safety.

Joint systems and processes for child protection, which are used across the whole school, are generally sound, although they could be better integrated. When safeguarding concerns are identified, a suitable system for raising those concerns in writing means that these are drawn to the attention of designated senior leaders in a timely manner. Consideration of written concerns demonstrates that they are taken seriously and senior staff are responsive to the issues raised. Brief fact-finding exercises are undertaken, especially in cases when pupils make repeated allegations, according to clear risk assessments. When concerns are raised as safeguarding matters, they are dealt with appropriately to ensure the individual child's safety. Handwritten forms aid the timely nature of the process, but can potentially be confusing when staff's or leader's handwriting is not clear.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced head of care who is an accomplished leader and manager of the residential provision. She is supported by a deputy and team leaders, and as a leadership team they ensure that the residential care of pupils is thoroughly organised. Staff morale is high, and the team works cohesively and benefits from the direction and guidance of the managers. Overall, the staff team is accomplished in prioritising the pupils' needs and helping them to achieve well.

Staff undertake an induction and a broad range of training to have the skills and knowledge to meet the specific needs of pupils, such as those who have autistic spectrum disorder, sensory impairment and pathological demand avoidance. Staff achieve at least the recommended qualification for their role, which promotes their professional competence. This is enhanced with support from the on-site multi-professional expertise, including psychology, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. This personal support team advises both care and teaching staff, contributing to the whole-school approach to pupils' welfare.

There are good staffing levels and low staff turnover. This provides pupils with sufficient levels of support and they experience a reassuring predictability from

familiar staff. Regular staff supervision, that includes reflective practice, keeps the focus of support on pupils' needs.

The manager and staff have very good relationships with parents and there are positive professional relationships with placing authorities. Along with the on-site specialist input, pupils benefit from a comprehensive and thorough approach to the planning and assessment of their needs. There are effective systems to track and review pupils' care progress so as to continually provide them with the best support possible.

The head of care maintains an extensive oversight of residential care practice through regular audits, observation, staff supervision and consultation with pupils, their parents and staff. This is supplemented by an external independent review completed every half-term. These reviews don't always evaluate aspects of practice that may support continuous improvements, in areas such as physical intervention, complaints and safeguarding referrals. Furthermore, the quality of governance by the proprietor has areas of weakness. For example, the scrutiny of the school's safeguarding systems and professional challenge to the designated safeguarding leads is weak. There are four safeguarding leads, all responsible for deciding how to respond to any concerns raised. Although they all act safely, the lack of oversight does not guarantee a consistent, cohesive and extensive approach. The school keeps senior managers informed of significant events, but this is more of a one-way process.

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

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Inspectors

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