

# Elemore Hall School

Littletown, Durham DH6 1QD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential special school for up to 86 boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. All pupils have an education, health and care plan to meet their needs, due to social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.

The school is located a few miles outside the centre of Durham. It is a converted country house in its own grounds, and has a residential facility for up to 25 residential pupils split between two units.

The school offers a residential provision for boys, who can stay for up to four nights a week, excluding weekends and school holidays.

**Inspection dates:** 20 to 22 February 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
---	-------------

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:** 31 January 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 care and support. Relationships between the children and young people are very positive, as are their relationships with staff. Transitional planning for school leavers is very well organised.
- The children and young people are making good progress, both socially and academically. They enjoy very positive day-to-day experiences. The staff regularly consult the children and young people, taking their views and wishes into account.
- Risk management is good, and positive behaviour management is a strength of the school. The children and young people are safe.
- The overall leadership and management of the school is good. The children's and young people's needs and their outcomes are paramount. The suitably experienced and qualified staff team feels supported and valued.
- Monitoring is effective and there are systems in place to identify any weaknesses and how leaders and managers will address these. The school has a positive ethos that promotes and respects the children's and young people's equality and diversity.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The staff do not write the children's and young people's residential plans in a child-friendly format that is easily understandable by the children and young people.
- There is currently no head of care in post, and no clear management arrangements for the residential provision in the absence of a head of care.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Review and update the children's and young people's residential plans to ensure that they are written in a format that is easily understandable, taking into account the children's and young people's age and their level of understanding.
- Ensure that, in the absence of a permanent head of care, there are clear leadership and management arrangements in place.

## Inspection judgements

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

The children and young people are making very good progress as a direct result of their residential experiences. The staff team provides high-quality care. The relationships between the staff, the children and the young people are positive and meaningful. This positive approach to supporting the children and young people results in very good outcomes.

A young person said; 'I love to come here, and all the staff are great. I can talk to the staff, and they have really helped me. We all get on, and we have a laugh.'

A parent said: 'Before my son started residential, he wouldn't do anything, but the staff have helped him so much. He has grown in confidence and his self-esteem is very good now.'

There are shortfalls in the way that the staff write the children's and young people's residential plans, namely that the plans are not written in a child-friendly format so that the children and young people can understand them. This has not impacted on the quality of the care. However, it does limit the children's and young people's direct involvement in their planning.

The children and young people said that the staff regularly consult with them and that they feel that their views are important. This promotes the children's and young people's equality and diversity. Educational outcomes are good. Joint working between the residential and the school staff is very good. This provides a stable, consistent environment in which the children and young people are engaging in the school curriculum.

Activities are a particular strength of the residential provision. There is a wide range of opportunities for the children and young people to join activity clubs in which they can learn a range of new skills and have positive experiences. During a group discussion, all the children and young people agreed that the activities 'are one of the best things about the residential'.

A parent said; 'The activities are really good. (Name) prefers a smaller group, and the staff facilitate this. He has got friends now, which he never had before. I cannot fault the staff. The whole school is brilliant.'

The staff meet the children's and young people's health needs, including their emotional and psychological needs. The school have progressed since last inspection by investing additional funding to pay for an educational psychologist to visit the school weekly. This offers the children and young people additional, specialist support.

The educational psychologist said: 'My observations about the school are that the staff have very good relationships with the pupils. Personal tutors are supportive, and the ethos of the school comes across as warm and caring. There is a general sense that staff want to look after the young people.'

Since the last inspection, there has been a focus on supporting the children and young people to develop skills for independence. The staff use a range of creative strategies to engage the children and young people to learn such skills that will support them in later life.

A parent said: 'The staff have brought out so much in my son and they have helped him to develop new skills. He can now wash his own uniform and he has learned to cook. He is so much better at socialising. He never had any friends before he came here, and he loves it.'

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

The staff keep the children and young people safe during their residential stays. They receive regular child protection training, and they know what to do if they are worried or concerned about a child's or a young person's welfare.

Good supervision of the children and young people reduces the likelihood of bullying. There have been no children or young people going missing from the residential provision, and none of the residential children and young people are at known risk from exploitation, radicalisation or extremism.

The staff use a range of positive behaviour management strategies to help the children and young people to develop positive social skills. The staff focus on rewards and incentives to encourage good behaviours, which is having a positive impact. The staff rarely use restraints in the residential provision, and only as a last resort.

A parent said: 'My son had to move out of mainstream school because of his behaviours. Since he came to this school he is a lot more confident, and calmer. The staff here give him more time to process things, and more encouragement and this has really helped. Over the last year he's a different child, more confident.'

Another parent commented: 'This school is brilliant. My son was excluded every day at mainstream school and now he attends 100%. The staff are very understanding. My son is not a naughty kid, he just couldn't cope. He loves it at this school.'

Risk management is good, which effectively safeguards and promotes the children's and young people's welfare. Individual children's and young people's risk assessments set out their known risks, and how the staff will minimise these. Good health and safety risk management and fire safety measures ensure that the children and young people stay in a safe environment.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The school has progressed by meeting two previous areas for improvement. There are now clear protocols to ensure that only suitably qualified staff deliver therapeutic work, and senior teachers and/or managers have access to the school records in the absence of the headteacher.

The school and the residential provision have high aspirations for the children and young people. A significant improvement, since the last inspection, is the introduction of a new electronic recording system that focuses on comprehensive assessments of the children's and young people's needs. This leads to highly individualised planning, which ensures that the children and young people receive the care and support that they need.

There is an emphasis on teaching the children and young people about the school's ethos and values. This focuses on positive learning, and uses encouragement and rewards for positive behaviours and improvements. The children and young people are responding extremely well to this approach.

Improvements in the residential provision include introducing more flexibility to boarding arrangements to support the children, young people and their families, for example, offering additional overnight stays if needed. Better planning also means that more children and young people are able to have residential stays, which enables them to take part in after-school activities. Relationships with parents are very good.

A parent said; 'The staff are brilliant, really good, we can talk to them about anything. There is absolutely nothing bad that I can say about this school.'

Another parent commented: 'My son has been to two previous residential schools that didn't go very well for him. This school has done more for him than anywhere else. He loves it and he is advancing since he went to the school. The staff are great, helpful. This is exactly the right place for him. He is enjoying school and residential, and he's learning.'

The residential staff are very experienced, and they have the training and the knowledge that they need to meet the needs of the children and young people. Effective supervision and yearly appraisals ensure that the staff receive very good support. Relationships between the staff are positive. They are supportive of one another and work closely as a team. This provides the children and young people with stability.

Recent changes within the residential staff team have resulted in a vacancy for a head of care. In the interim, two senior residential staff are undertaking additional duties, such as carrying out staff supervision and monitoring the children's and

young people's residential plans. However, it is not clear who is taking responsibility for the residential provision or who is accountable for the smooth running of the residential units. This could, potentially, destabilise the operation of the residential provision.

There is monitoring oversight of the residential provision. An independent person regularly visits the provision to audit and monitor day-to-day practices. She also spends time on the units with the children and young people, and she regularly consults them to ascertain their views. The headteacher also monitors the residential provision, and he provides regular reports that he shares with the board of governors.

There are two new areas for improvement arising from this inspection.

## **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 difference 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:** SC040508

**Headteacher:** Mr Royle

**Type of school:** residential special school

**Telephone number:** 0191 3720275

**Email address:** [elemore@durhamlearning.net](mailto:elemore@durhamlearning.net)

## **Inspector**

Debbie White, social care inspector





The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018