

# Eaton Hall Specialist Academy

Eaton Hall School, Pettus Road, Norwich NR4 7BU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy is a day and residential special school located in a residential area of Norwich. The school and the accommodation is purpose-built. All four residential units sit within the school or on the school campus. The Year 4 to Year 8 children board on weekdays. The school currently provides places for 55 boys who have behavioural and/or emotional and/or social difficulties. During this inspection, 25 children board at various times from Monday to Thursday. The school was last inspected in September 2017

**Inspection dates:** 25 to 27 April 2018

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 12 September 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The school and residential experience are assimilated.
- The children receive excellent care from dedicated and committed staff who know the children very well and form supportive and caring relationships with them.
- Children receive excellent emotional support and their self-esteem and self-worth improve.
- Children's school attendance and ability to engage with the structure and routine of school mean that children's ability to learn significantly improves.
- Children's behaviour improves greatly.
- Children have fun and learn new skills.
- Children benefit from the consistency, structure and routine of boarding and from being part of the wider school community.
- Robust safeguarding practices are embedded across the school.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Deliver planned group interventions for parents.
- Update digital information for parents, carers and children about the residential offer.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the structured interventions planned to work in partnership with parents to help them to promote understanding of behaviour and emotional resilience are implemented.
- Ensure that digital information is available for children and their parents about the residential offer, for example on the school website.

## Inspection judgements

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

Boarding and school life are assimilated. The children are proud and experience belonging to the school community. This enables the children to build meaningful and trusting relationships with the range of skilled adults who proactively help and support them across their day and evening. Dynamic childcare workers and teaching staff work energetically and seamlessly to deliver a high-quality, supportive and structured residential experience. The excellent quality of the individual relationships between the adults and the children helps every child to flourish, achieve and sustain improvement.

Overall, school attendance improves for those children in residence. For example, since the last inspection, figures show that children who board achieve 95% attendance compared to 85% for those who do not board.

Children's academic performance improves and individuals make exceptional progress from their starting points. Children make effective contributions and they learn. For example, prior to admission a number of the children have experienced exclusion from other education provisions and/or have been without structured education for a number of months. Many of the children take medication daily. The majority of children have behavioural diagnoses or are undergoing formal assessments. The whole-school approach to boarding is highly organised to ensure that the children have fun but also have time to benefit from help and support from the adults. For example, in the evening's children read and the staff read to the children. As a result, data shows that this helps to improve writing composition and reading ability for the children in residence. In the evenings, older children benefit from planned and individualised opportunities to help them to develop and practise independence skills, for example in cooking or personal hygiene. This ensures that children develop transferable life skills and this improves confidence and self-esteem.

Children who board sit on the school council and this gives the group direct access to the adults responsible for decision-making about residency. Children have an active voice. For example, the children shape social and recreational plans and this means that they benefit from a plethora of fun and exciting games and activities in the grounds of the school and in the local community. For example, children go swimming and roller-skating in the local community with the adults. A secured wooded area on the school grounds allows children to run around and play games. The staff team goes above and beyond by offering fun planned trips to destinations chosen by the children at the weekends. All of this allows children to express themselves, to be social and to get vital exercise. The staff are perceptive to the needs of individual children and have the skill and ability to anticipate where issues could arise, for example in play between the children. This ensures that all children have the opportunity to experience some success in peer relationships because they learn how to cooperate and to manage conflict and difficulties more effectively. Some

of the children learn how to make and sustain friendships. This helps to raise children's self-worth.

Significant investment and improvements to the residence mean that all of the children are cared for on the school premises. For example, the newly opened house for Years 7 and 8 pupils provides excellent, spacious and modern accommodation. All children benefit from an excellent variety of healthy and nutritious meals. Each child has their own bedroom. Internal living rooms enable those children who can, to relax after a hard day at school. One child said, 'Boarding is absolutely fantastic. I and lots of the pupils love it. All of the staff are kind and caring. Every one of them. Boarding makes a big difference to my life.'

Admissions to boarding are carefully planned, monitored and reviewed. The team takes an active account of each child's individual circumstances, including family history, identity and culture to help to craft individual support plans. All staff come to know the children very well. Childcare practice is informed by research into developing confident children. Named childcare workers dedicate time to specific children and those staff come to develop an excellent understanding of the individual child's social, emotional, educational and behavioural support needs. One member of staff said, 'The best thing about this job is that over the years you get to see the progress that individual children make across their lives.'

Childcare workers routinely communicate and discuss issues with parents. The staff provide minimum weekly updates to parents and carers about progress and experiences across the school week. Frequently, staff attend a variety of meetings and appointments alongside parents, for example with health and social care professionals. This robust and vigorous approach ensures that no stone is left unturned when children require additional specialist help to support their individual social, emotional and educational needs. The school has identified a plan to work even more proactively with parents and carers towards encouraging a greater shared understanding of resilience and children's behaviour. This inspection recommends that this plan of work is implemented and embedded.

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

Unanimously, children say that they feel safe and are protected from harm. Children are confident that adults know how to help them. One child said, 'Recently, I feel even safer.' Children have a strong sense of the importance of their safety. For example, a buddy scheme provides an additional avenue of support for those children who may be less inclined to approach an adult directly. One child said, 'My job is to listen and to tell an adult if I am worried.' Photographs of the independent listener around the school and information in the children's guide ensure that children and their families are aware that there are additional external routes of support for all children.

All children can identify a trusted adult to approach should they experience difficulty in school or at home. Robust safeguarding practices are embedded throughout the

school. The role and function of the designated leads for safeguarding are clear to all staff. This ensures that procedures are robustly followed in the event of a safeguarding or child protection matter arising. Allegations or suspicions of harm are shared immediately with the appropriate agencies, parents or carers. Senior staff are clear about the role of the designated officer and have no hesitation in seeking advice or escalating concerns. Clear record-keeping ensures that the actions taken by senior staff in response to any kind of concern are available for future reference if needed. This means that there is a robust and transparent approach to all safeguarding matters.

Children do not go missing. Harm reduction plans clearly identify known risks associated with individual behaviours. Plans are updated to reflect current issues and this helps staff to remain up to date and alert to any concerning or problematic behaviours. This helps children to feel secure and safe.

Physical interventions are limited to a handful of the children and only used for high-risk behaviours. Sampling of records shows that the frequency and intensity of interventions are reducing for those children. Staff use a range of techniques and approaches to support children in crisis before using physical intervention, including distraction and humour. Staff consistently spend time with each child following any physical intervention and parents or carers are kept fully up to date. On every occasion, the child has an opportunity to express their opinion about the incident and speak to an adult who was not involved. The approach ensures transparency, helps children to be involved in identifying solutions and demonstrates a determination to further reduce incidents resulting in physical management.

A restorative approach is taken to managing behaviour and the children learn about what is acceptable and what unacceptable behaviour looks like. The highly structured reward and privilege scheme is deeply embedded across the school. All of the children spoken to in this inspection liked the system and some had made suggestions about how to improve it. This helps every children to aspire to achieve. The behaviour of children known to have a history of significant challenge is often exemplary. This demonstrates that children are empowered to prepare for their future.

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

The school's inspirational leadership team is exceptionally experienced. Its members share a collective ambition to effect meaningful and lasting change for the children in their care.

The head of care is appropriately qualified and has been in post for many years. She works shoulder to shoulder with colleagues at all levels to ensure that each child receives individualised and effective support. The members of the senior leadership team know all of the children by name. They have understanding and empathy for the children and their respective social circumstances. This helps to ensure that child-centred decisions are made about the children coming to board at the school.

A culture of high expectations permeates across the school. The staff share the leadership team's vision to provide high-quality experiences for children and to help them to succeed and progress. The experienced, knowledgeable and nurturing staff create the environment to help the children to thrive. Supported by their leaders, the staff are innovative in their approach to working with the children and as a result, the children have fun and respond positively to the routine and structure of boarding. Where problems emerge, for example between children, the staff and leaders are quick to implement a plan of action to reduce risk and to encourage the children to learn from experience and behaviour. Robust and professional relationships with partner agencies including health, mental health and social care ensure that plans to address children's individual needs remain robust, dynamic and helpful to the individual child and their family.

The emphasis on working as a team of adults around the child is clearly evident in day-to-day practice. Many of the care staff have worked in the school for a number of years. Care staff and teaching staff work together across the school day and this ensures seamless support for the children in the evenings. Staff are qualified and hold the required level 3 diploma. The routine of staff supervision, appraisal, training and opportunities for reflection are firmly rooted into practice and these arrangements ensure that staff remain competent in fulfilling their role to support and mentor the children.

The senior leaders provide detailed and evaluative reports for the governing body, which monitors the school's activities closely. Governors play a critical role in challenging the leadership team to improve policies and children's experiences.

The school has met the national minimum standards and recommendations raised from the last inspection. For example, the missing child policy is unambiguous in guiding staff should a child go missing from the school grounds. Significant improvement in external monitoring since the last inspection provides specific and helpful recommendations to the staff and leadership team about how to improve children's experiences.

The statement of principles provides clear information about the ethos and objectives of the school. The school's website provides good information for professionals, parents and children; however, a refresh of digital information specifically about boarding will help new children and their parents to have a clearer picture of what to expect.

Parents and carers have confidence in the school's ability to understand, support and care for their child. One parent said, 'When my child first started to board I was nervous about it. I needn't have been. Now, I really do not know where we would be as a family without the support.'

## **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:** SC038324

**Headteacher/Teacher in charge:** Mr Keith Bates

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Rosie Davie, social care inspector



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