

# Fred Nicholson School

Westfield Road, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1JB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Fred Nicholson School is a day and maintained residential special school for pupils aged between seven and 16. The school currently has 26 children, who stay for between one and four nights each week. The residential provision is situated in the main school building and provides separate accommodation for boys and girls. The school caters for children who have moderate learning difficulties such as speech and language disorders, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 8 to 10 October 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be 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:** 10 January 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is good because:

- Children are happy and enjoy their time in the residential provision.
- Safeguarding procedures are established and work well throughout the school.
- Children make good progress and benefit from staying at school.
- There are a number of improvements since the last inspection.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- One risk assessment was not completed prior to a child staying.
- The oversight of health and safety concerns is not well managed.
- There is a lack of evidence to show that the head of care receives regular supervision.
- The failure of professionals outside school to provide minutes of meetings has not been escalated appropriately.
- There are three unmet national minimum standards. These have not affected the children's welfare or safety.

## **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:

- 6.2 The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured.
- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that minutes and records of information following professionals' meetings are obtained and accessible, and that concerns are pursued when such information is not received.

## Inspection judgements

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

Children have good relationships with staff. There is a relaxed and warm rapport between the children and the staff. High levels of support are given to new children. Children who are experiencing difficulties are reassured by staff, which helps them adjust to being away from home and builds their resilience.

Children who have few opportunities to socialise outside their family homes benefit from peer friendships and social activities. A parent said, 'Since being at the school, she [my child] has friends. This is wonderful.'

Education, health and care (EHC) plans are individualised and informative. The school tracks progress through the EHC plan. The plans identify targets and help children achieve in all areas of their development. Children who use the residential provision make consistent progress and are given support with reading and literacy by the staff. A parent said that her child benefited from this help and improved her reading and speaking as a result. Children in receipt of pupil premium benefit from extra support and resources. Trained staff support individuals with extra learning. Value for pupil premium is reviewed at professionals' meetings. This ensures that children benefit from the resources designed to aid their learning.

The staff help children to manage their health needs and medication. There are healthy food options. Fruit is presented appealingly, and children are encouraged to drink milk or water. After-school snacks are healthy and balanced. The children have a good rapport with the evening chef. This builds their confidence in menu options and encourages them to try new foods.

New windows and freshly painted walls have improved the accommodation. New curtains and sofas chosen by children are on order. Bed spaces are personalised. Children returning from the summer holidays were pleased to see the changes. The involvement of children in the decor has increased their sense of belonging.

There are regular activities and trips out during residential time. Better planning of trips that are further afield has given children a wider range of experiences. These include a scavenger hunt, den building and walks on the marshes. There is an emphasis on children's choices and recording what children gain from activities. The staff are trying to encourage children to think about their achievements to help them recognise their individual strengths.

There is a focus on independence targets and career destination work. The children work towards accredited awards. They benefit from gaining health and beauty and food preparation awards. The children budget and shop for food and pack away food supplies. Children build on their independence skills from their original starting points.

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

The inspection identified hazards in residential areas. Dormitories and communal areas have several health and safety concerns. These include a glove covering a smoke alarm, stacked chairs, and staff carrying hot drinks across busy communal areas where children are sitting on the floor. There are windows that are not restricted in fire exit stairways overlooking a first-floor drop. None of these risks was identified by staff. The staff carry out regular risk assessments but failed to see these potential hazards.

Additionally, despite an incident during which a child accessed residential accommodation during the school day through an open door, this door remained propped open. Children who require extra support with fire evacuation and responding to alarms are assessed, to guide staff in how to help them. One child identified as needing extra support had no risk assessment completed, despite staying overnight. This means that staff may not be aware of how to best support the child.

Children said that they feel safe. This was confirmed by parents and carers. There are very few incidents during residential time. The relationships between staff, children, parents, carers and social workers are good. The children feel listened to and know who to approach with any worries or concerns.

High ratios of staff in communal areas mean that any tensions or unkind words are challenged immediately. Children are accepting of their differences and generally respect one another. This helps ensure that everyone feels equally valued.

The experience of staying in residence positively changes children's behaviours. Clear target setting shows a good understanding of children's behaviours and capabilities. Plans describe triggers and provide strategies to help children learn to self-regulate and manage their feelings.

Children are encouraged to consider how their behaviour affects others. Behaviour management records demonstrate when intervention has been required. Restorative approaches are used to increase children's understanding of their behaviours.

Staff are aware of internet safety, and children's access to the internet is appropriately supervised. The staff recognise internet safeguarding issues and take timely and effective action that reduces the risks to children.

Safeguarding and day-to-day concerns are recognised and acted on swiftly. The designated safeguarding lead actively communicates with the designated officer and police to follow up on safeguarding concerns. This protects children from harm.

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

The head of care manages the residential provision, closely supported by a deputy and senior staff. The head of care is experienced in working in residential special schools and is working towards a level 5 qualification. A clear management structure provides lines of accountability. Close links with the school leadership team help increase information sharing. This supports continuity of care.

The senior leadership team has dealt with a serious incident that is under investigation. This has been managed well in respect of informing parents and carers, minimising reputational risk and maintaining positive staff morale.

A drive to improve the service and make best use of resources and accommodation has enhanced children's experiences. The school has made some progress against the shortfalls identified at the last inspection; a review and action plan show this. Good systems that work well and help the school capture safeguarding information are beneficial in collecting information about children's safety and welfare.

The development of staff members' roles gives staff accountability in specific areas and enhances the quality of children's time in residence. Staff feel supported and most staff are supervised. However, the head of care does not have supervision.

Complaints and concerns are addressed and responded to.

Parents and carers spoken with gave positive feedback about the benefits of the residential provision. They like the communication and feel that they are kept up to date in regard to their children's progress and any incidents.

Children's views are sought, and regular meetings and surveys capture children's ideas. Although there is evidence of acting on children's choices in some areas, there are also limitations. However, the school has recruited staff who can provide team games as requested by children.

### **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:** SC038284

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Jane Hayman

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Deirdra Keating, social care inspector (lead)  
Mandy Nightingale, social care inspector



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