

Windlestone School

Chilton, Ferryhill, Co Durham DL17 0HP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential special school for 80 children and young people aged from 11 to 16 years who have social and/or emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The school also manages a Personal Alternative Curriculum Centre for 20 children and young people who need additional support. There are two residential units that provide accommodation for up to 20 children and young people. The school also offers extended stays to all pupils, should they wish to participate in after-school activities. This modern school is in a semi-rural location and it homes a small farm in the school grounds. A new head of care has recently been recruited.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 October 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 9 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children and young people enjoy their stays in the residential provision. They have positive relationships with the staff and with each other. The staff provide good individualised care.
- The children and young people are progressing and achieving. They are consulted and supported by their mentor, and their wishes are considered. Educational outcomes are improving because of their residential stays.
- The development of additional therapeutic services within the school is improving the children's and young people's well-being. Activities are very good, and carefully planned transitions enhance the children's and young people's experiences.
- The children and young people are safe. Behaviour management is positive and risk management is effective.
- Leadership and management are improved by the school employing a new head of care. The residential staff are committed to improving the outcomes for the children and young people.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The school has failed to meet a previously unmet national minimum standard for residential special schools.
- The induction of new staff is unsatisfactory.
- There are some shortfalls in the residential staffing arrangements. In particular, the school does not have adequate resources to cover unplanned staff sickness and absence.

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:

- 1.1 A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the Statement of Purpose is available to parents and staff, is made known to children through an appropriate method of communication and is seen to work in practice. The statement describes the overall purpose of the school and describes any theoretical or therapeutic model underpinning the practice of the school. It also explains the ethos and philosophy of the school, and provides an outline of provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 19.3 A school ensures that new staff undertake an induction programme designed and delivered to enable them to meet the range of needs of children at the school and fully equip them to identify and safely manage safeguarding issues. The programme should begin within 7 working days of starting their employment and be completed within 6 months.

Recommendations

- Consider options to employ additional staff to cover unplanned sickness and absence.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children and young people have positive day-to-day experiences. The staff consult the children and young people to ascertain their views and wishes, and each child or young person has a staff mentor who they can talk to about any concerns or worries that they may have. The children and young people respond positively to the staff's nurturing and caring approach, which gives them stability and consistency. A young person said: 'I always look for my mentor when I need to talk, even when I am in school. He is always there for me.'

The children and young people have formed meaningful bonds with the staff and with each other. Individualised care is good, and support for parents is very good. These measures enhance good outcomes for the children, young people and their families. A parent said: 'I cannot fault the residential. The staff are great, and they are always there for us. I would say they are outstanding, and the best thing that has ever happened to my son.'

The children and young people are achieving academically, and their general healthcare needs are met. The school has further invested in the children's and young people's emotional health and well-being by commissioning additional health and therapeutic professionals. Having these facilities in school gives the children and young people immediate access to specialist services and support. A visiting healthcare professional said: 'The school are being very proactive and positive about moving forward with their therapeutic services. This feels really good.'

Carefully planned activities encourage the children and young people to develop their social and integration skills. This is particularly beneficial to those children and young people who are socially isolated. The activities are varied and focus on the children and young people having fun and having exciting new experiences. This builds the children's and young people's confidence and encourages them to develop their aspirations. A parent said: 'The residential makes such a difference to my son. He cannot go out when he's at home, so this is where he gets to meet his friends and to socialise. He gets to try new things and he has had some great experiences.'

Transitional arrangements are very well organised and focus on transitions being a positive experience for children, young people and their parents. Arrangements are made for new children moving to the school and their parents to visit the school before the academic year starts. They participate in activities and meet the teachers and the residential staff. This reduces any anxieties or fears that the children may have about changing schools.

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

The children and young people are safe during their residential stays. All the parents consulted during this inspection said that their children and young people are safe

during their residential stays. They are confident that the staff will care for their children and young people 'as if they were their own children'.

The staff receive regular child protection training, which includes learning to recognise indicators that children and young people may be at risk from harm. The school has a dedicated safeguarding member of staff who effectively oversees all safeguarding concerns and liaises with relevant local authority safeguarding officers. This focused approach protects the children's and young people's welfare.

There are no children or young people at risk from exploitation, radicalisation or extremism. The children and young people reported that there is no bullying in the residential unit and that incidents of bullying in the school have reduced since the last inspection.

The staff manage behaviour positively. They have a very good understanding of why some children and young people struggle to regulate their behaviours, and the staff respond accordingly. Good relationships between the staff and the children and young people are a key element of good behaviour management. Consequently, the children and young people feel supported and emotionally secure during their residential stays.

Risk management has improved since the last inspection. The head of care has reviewed the children's and young people's risk assessments to ensure that they are individualised and that they focus on known risks and how these will be minimised. This progress promotes the children's and young people's welfare.

The children and young people stay in a safe environment that meets their needs. Health and safety and fire safety measures are frequently monitored, and there are very good systems in place to ensure that all aspects of the school environment are safe and secure. The school business manager strictly adheres to procedures for 'safer staff recruitment', which protects the children and young people from being exposed to unsuitable adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

This outcome area is judged as requires improvement because the school has failed to meet a recommendation that was identified at the previous inspection, to provide a suitable statement of purpose.

The school has recently appointed a new head of care who is impacting positively on the operation of the residential units and the outcomes of the children and young people. The head of care has previously worked in social care settings, which has equipped her with a wide range of relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

The head of care is highly motivated, enthusiastic and committed to her new role. The residential staff are equally committed to supporting the children, young people

and their families. Feedback from the children, young people and parents about the staff is highly complimentary.

The team is very well established, which provides the children and young people with high levels of stability and consistency. The staffing complement is adequate to staff the residential units, including providing cover for staff holidays and planned absence. There have, however, been times when there have not been sufficient staff to cover unplanned sickness and absence, and on one occasion one of the residential units had to close overnight.

Staff training is good, and all the residential support staff have a level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people. There are, however, shortfalls in the quality of staff induction. In particular, the new head of care has not had any formal induction or received regular, planned supervision.

Leaders, managers and the staff have high aspirations for the children and young people, which encourages consistent progress and achievement. The staff encourage the children and young people to develop their confidence and self-belief, which significantly improves their self-esteem.

The school's ethos to support each child and young person to achieve their very best is threaded throughout educational and residential practice. This actively promotes equality and diversity for all the children and young people.

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: SC007615

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr T Bennett

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Debbie White, social care inspector



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