

Wilds Lodge School

Wilds Lodge School, Stamford Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Wilds Lodge School is an independent residential and day school. Pupils are aged between five and 19. Pupils have social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The residential provision provides boarding for 60 pupils, currently all boys. The school is situated on two sites, a few miles from each other. The accommodation is divided into five boarding areas. The boys are divided into groups according to their age and vulnerability. Most boys stay in residence for four or five nights a week.

Inspection dates: 30 October to 1 November 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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	good
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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: 9 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children make extremely positive progress from their starting points. Aspirational staff help children achieve to their highest potential, despite their previous experiences.
- Excellent joint work between care, education and therapy teams means that children benefit from a wrap-around 24-hour curriculum.
- Children enjoy an enormous range of experiences. The opportunities, facilities and resources available to them are exceptional.
- The education and residential provisions are furnished to an extraordinary high standard. This high-quality environment helps children to understand that they are valued.
- Work with parents is excellent. Parents speak extremely highly of the school. They consider the residential provision to be 'better than outstanding'.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Some of the recording, such as the way that risk assessments are written, could be improved.

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

Recommendations

- Recording could be improved in several areas:
 - Risk assessments are not always recorded in detail.
 - Actions agreed during supervision and team meetings are not always noted clearly.
 - Terminology used in incident reports sometimes lacks precision.
- All outside storage areas should be locked in line with their risk assessments.
- Leaders should ensure greater staff consistency in the implementation of routines.
- Leaders should consider extending the range of external monitoring in order to help them identify any weaknesses and to develop further.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children recognise the excellent progress that they make and the positive impact that the school has on their lives. One child who recently left wrote: 'Thank you for giving me a second chance at life and making me the person I am today.' Parents speak of the life-changing impact that the school has had for the child who attends and the whole family.

Comments from parents demonstrate the extremely positive impact that the school has had:

- 'It is as if someone has pressed a positive reset button. It has meant that we've been able to keep our son.'
- 'We have a much happier house now. Siblings look forward to seeing each other.'
- 'My son could not read when he came and now he is in an age-appropriate class.'
- 'There is so much compassion and care from all the staff.'

The experience of staying at the school helps children to reduce their anxiety and to understand their emotions. This helps them to make progress.

Children enjoy an incredible range of new experiences. These include trips to Rotterdam, Barcelona and France, visits to festivals and a host of physical activities such as horse-riding. Children participate in community events and fundraising activities for national charities. Recently, children undertook a beach clear up at a local coastal resort. This activity was streamed live to parents so that they could see the hard work that their children put in. The school hosts an annual music festival, inviting other primary and secondary schools.

Children take part in various business enterprise schemes in order to fund some of the activities. For example, children operated a series of pop-up restaurant events, hosting and cooking for staff to raise funds for a European trip.

Children learn independence skills appropriate to their age. The younger children help to clear tables and to tidy their rooms. Older children do their own shopping, cooking and laundry, as well as enjoying increased free time in the local community.

Children take part in programmes to develop their personal and social skills. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the National Citizen Service programme.

The integrated approach to care provided by therapists and care and education staff is instrumental in children's outstanding progress. Staff are very creative in their approach. They ensure that care is tailored to meet the needs of each child. There

are examples of excellent practice that are worthy of sharing with others, such as dance therapy and eco-therapy. Staff research into risky play is beginning to provide exciting opportunities for children to take risks in a safe and educational way.

Staff ensure that each child feels comfortable, safe and welcome when they come into the residential setting.

Plans for the care of children have clear targets. These are regularly reviewed and closely linked to education targets. Children's varied, and often complex, health needs are well met. The storage, administration and recording of medication are safe. Children take part in healthy and energetic activities. They have fun playing games such as tag. Children enjoy nutritious meals. Staff clearly understand the range of allergens that may be present in food. This helps to keep children healthy.

Children have a voice in their care. All children take part in after-school meetings in which they share their experiences of the day. Some children take part in the school council. This group has helped to redesign the school uniform and is currently developing the student handbook. Some children also attend the local authority youth council, enabling them to have a say in local opportunities for children.

Residential pupils live in a breath-taking environment, which they are very proud of. This is reflected in the fact that there is little or no damage to the building. The school recently opened its new theatre. This provides space for children to perform and also teaches stage management, set changing, set design, lighting and sound.

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

Children's behaviour improves hugely. This is because staff help children to understand their emotions and to find appropriate ways to express themselves. A culture of trust and respect is encouraged throughout the school. This builds good relationships. Parents spoke of this respect being replicated in the family home. One parent said, 'Our son does not hit us anymore and that is amazing.'

Staff understand how to keep children safe from bullying. Children are aware that bullying is not acceptable and say that bullying is not an issue. One child said that while people may argue, there is no bullying.

The use of restraint has dramatically reduced. A model of de-escalation has been introduced. This has been led by an extremely motivated and passionate member of staff, who is disseminating good practice across the whole school. Recording of any incidents includes a detailed reflection on practice. The risk reduction plan is updated accordingly. This ensures that all staff learn from any interventions.

All staff, including domestic staff, receive training on physical intervention. This ensures that even staff who may only witness incidents understand the correct practice and can report any concerns.

Staff receive an excellent array of training relating to safeguarding. This includes training about:

- female genital mutilation
- sexual exploitation
- sexting
- PREVENT
- domestic violence
- drug misuse
- bullying
- neglect
- learning from abuse.

Staff have good links with community groups and medical practitioners to support training in areas such as self-harm. Attendance at conferences and visits to other schools encourage the sharing of good practice in safeguarding. Staff work closely with parents to help them learn how to safeguard their children.

Good recruitment processes ensure that unsuitable staff are prevented from working in the school. If recruitment checks raise any concerns, these are discussed and a detailed record made of the decision-making process.

Staff deal with any maintenance issues swiftly. Fire safety checks are carried out as required, and children and staff take part in regular evacuation practice. One outside area containing pallets and grass cuttings was not secured during the inspection, although the risk assessment stated that it should be.

All staff undertake training in safeguarding and understand how to respond to allegations. Managers have a good relationship with the local authority. A recent allegation by a child about another child has been referred to the appropriate agencies and action has been taken to keep children safe. The recording of this action lacks detail and this does not yet provide a clear chronology of events.

Children do not go missing. However, one record showed that a child had run away when they had not done so. This is a further example of imprecise recording.

There have been some incidents of children accessing the low roof of one of the buildings. Staff clearly understand how to prevent this happening and what to do on the rare occasions that it does happen. This has reduced the number of incidents. However, the risk assessments relating to this behaviour lack clarity and are not explicit in how to manage this risk. New staff may not have as clear an understanding as the existing staff team. The school leadership has explored risky play and is investing in suitable play equipment. This allows children whose sensory needs mean that they want to explore and climb to do so in a safe way.

Other risk assessments also lack clarity. For example, one described 'risky behaviours outside' but did not explain this in any detail. Risk assessments generally would

improve with more detail. However, it is clear from discussions with staff that they do fully understand how to effectively manage risks and keep children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leaders and managers of the school are highly motivated and enthusiastic about providing a high-quality provision for children. They are very experienced and appropriately qualified. Leaders visit other schools to share good practice. Leaders continually support more junior staff to develop their leadership skills, planning for succession.

Relationships with families are excellent. Staff encourage families to meet together and share experiences by hosting social events.

Transition to mainstream schools and colleges can be difficult for children. However, leaders persist to achieve the best options for children. Creative thinking has enabled one child to return to the school on an apprenticeship when they were unable to secure a college place.

Currently, just over half the care staff team members are qualified. Some staff have additional qualifications that are relevant but not equivalent to the diploma level 3 in health and social care. New staff are undertaking the relevant course. This means that most staff will soon be suitably qualified.

Staff performance is carefully monitored and reviewed. For example, a recent issue about one member of staff's approach has been discussed and recorded in their supervision. However, the record of actions required as a result of this discussion lacks clarity. Similarly, records of actions from team meetings are not clear.

There have been some minor incidents of inconsistent practice from staff, particularly relating to children's routines. This can cause confusion for some children.

An independent visitor attends the residential provision six times a year. The visitor provides a detailed report about the quality of care and the progress of children. Local authorities also undertake quality assurance visits. However, external monitoring of the residential provision could be strengthened. This would ensure that leaders are fully aware of any weaknesses and would help to shape the development plan, which is currently lacking in detail.

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: SC069231

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