

Vale of Evesham School

Four Pools Lane, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 1BN

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school is an academy and is directly responsible to a governing body. Vale of Evesham School provides education for pupils who have autism spectrum disorders and learning disabilities. The school caters for 198 pupils in total. The residential service operates from Monday to Friday and can accommodate up to 15 students. There were 15 children receiving a service at the time of the inspection and their age range was nine to 18 years. The school's last inspection was in February 2018.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 December 2018

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

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

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: 13 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children achieve ambitious targets and objectives that have a positive impact on children's lives. Children's progress towards adulthood is enhanced by their residential experience.
- Children thrive in an inclusive environment.
- Children exceed their educational targets because of their residential experience.
- Children's voices, views, wishes and feelings inform all aspects of residential life. Their feedback is used to continuously improve the opportunities and experiences offered by the school.
- Safeguarding is outstanding. There is a thorough and comprehensive approach to children's safety and welfare across the school site.
- Highly trained and vigilant staff keep children safe and help them to understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Communication between school, residential staff and families is excellent. This collaborative and seamless approach enhances learning experiences for children.
- Leadership and management are extremely effective, and the residential aspect of school is an integral part of the school life.
- An extremely motivated, skilled and dedicated staff team delivers exceptionally high-quality, individualised care to children.
- Managers and staff use research to underpin their everyday practice. In addition, the school shares its specialist knowledge with other residential schools.
- Parents are 'extremely happy' with the service provided. They describe the positive impact residential life has had on their children's progress. Some parents feel it has helped to keep their families together.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To expand on work with children to help them further understand their rights to privacy and personal dignity.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children continue to make exceptional, significant and sustained progress because of their residential experience. Staff promote participation and engagement very well. This develops children's social skills; improves their emotional health, self-esteem and self-confidence; develops their self-care and independence skills; and gives them positive, life-affirming opportunities. Children make friends and experience a wide range of activities. They learn new communication skills and alternative ways to manage their emotions. This all has a hugely positive impact on children's home life and on their academic progress.

The staff team creates a vibrant and nurturing community and environment in which each child flourishes. Relationships between staff and children are of the highest quality. Specialist staff support children across the residential and school day and ensure that the needs of each child are individually identified and sensitively met. This practice is continually reviewed, enhanced and developed. For example, time is set aside for care staff to meet and reflect on the 'Thrive Approach' with the school's trained practitioner. 'ASDAN' has been introduced as an accredited work scheme for residential children, providing a further measurement of their progress in meeting targets, aims and objectives and giving them a nationally recognised accredited award.

Children's contribution and self-advocacy are promoted at all times and are integral to the day-to-day operation of school and residential life. For example, there is a residential child representative on the school's 'Singalong' working party. There is a well-established and proactive residential children's forum. This is co-facilitated by a senior staff member and a residential child. On an annual basis, children fundraise for a charity of their choice. This year they are supporting Fletcher, a puppy training to be a guide dog.

Staff ensure that children have an active voice and that their ideas, wishes and feelings are acted on to continually improve the residential experience. This year children have planned and shot a short film, 'Welcome to the residential provision'. The video is now on the school's website and is used to help to introduce the school to new or prospective students. Children also provide emotional support and practical advice to residential peers, through a new 'mentoring' scheme. These projects and responsibilities help children develop transferable skills for a successful adult life. This year children have also volunteered at a retirement community, giving them the opportunity to experience a different work setting, develop emotional empathy and resilience, and widen their social horizons.

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

The senior management team has clear and meticulous arrangements in place to ensure that the safety of children is prioritised at all times. The preventative work that

staff do in building relationships and developing awareness among children is key to children's safety and well-being. Staff are exceptionally confident in their safeguarding responsibilities and enable children to take positive risks in a secure and supportive environment. The staff support children to learn new skills and develop their knowledge through discussions, imaginative games and working through practical situations. Some aspects of the children's awareness of their right to personal privacy are not addressed with as much rigour. Developing this would help to safeguard them further, as they move on to adulthood.

Safeguarding arrangements across the whole school are outstanding. All residential staff receive a range of mandatory and enhanced training in key topics, including safeguarding, preventing child sexual exploitation, e-safety, female genital mutilation and 'Prevent' duty. There are well-coordinated internal safeguarding meetings to develop awareness of any issues or incidents, monitor staff responses to improve their practice and undertake case reviews of safeguarding incidents to consider lessons learned. Managers are tenacious in challenging decisions made by partner agencies if they feel they have not been made in the best interest of children. This has resulted in changes to decisions and improved outcomes for children.

Staff have excellent insight into the complexities of children's communication, emotional and behavioural needs. There is continual emphasis on developing communication strategies to ensure that the child's voice is heard more clearly. Staff facilitate the effective organisation and daily operation of routines and enable children to take positive ownership of their residential environment. Children play a key part in identifying, and setting out, clear expectations of conduct and behaviour for everyone living in the residential accommodation. As a result, everyone benefits from an atmosphere that is calm, welcoming and friendly.

Managers and staff learn from research and initiatives in other residential schools. They continually collect and evaluate information about the effectiveness of the service. For example, ongoing concerns, patterns and trends have led the senior management team to devise strategies to improve the support offered to children who experience mental health concerns. A mental health well-being team is now in place. These team members are attending training, developing skills and introducing systems which will support the whole school cohort, as well as children with specific individual needs.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leadership is outstanding because the senior management team implements excellent procedures to monitor and review the care and support that children receive. Governors are well appraised of the successes and challenges of the residential service and work effectively with managers to develop resources and skills further.

Established internal and external quality assurance systems identify areas for continual improvement. These include improvement to quality assurance processes. For example, learning walks used in school have now also been introduced into the

residential service. The new link residential governor is being supported by a highly qualified and experienced independent external visitor. He is mentoring and supporting her development to ensure that she is able to undertake high-calibre visits, and make rigorous reports back to governors, when she takes on the role at the end of a year.

The care that children receive and the outcomes that children achieve are excellent because of the support that they have from staff. Staff practice is built on a firm foundation of well-understood policies and procedures, which are consistently reinforced through effective induction and probation processes, mandatory and refresher training, supervisions, annual appraisals and focused team meetings. This knowledge and understanding are further enhanced by regular visits to other outstanding residential schools.

All staff are committed to, and have high aspirations for, each of the children in their care. They work exceptionally well together as a team, and morale is high. The head of care and deputy are open and approachable. They ensure that there are excellent levels of communication between the residential staff, teaching staff, families and professionals. For example, one of the ways they support parents and carers is through regular opportunities to meet with professionals such as speech and language therapists and sexual health counsellors. They also support siblings, by providing them with opportunities to meet, participate in activities and talk to each other about their experiences.

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: SC043049

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Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, social care inspector (lead)
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