

North Hill House

North Hill House, Fromefield, Frome, Somerset BA11 2HB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

North Hill House is an independent residential special school providing weekly boarding for boys and girls aged six to 19 years. The school provides for pupils who have autism spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome and associated learning difficulties.

The last inspection took place in February 2018.

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 January 2019

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

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

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

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 21 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Children enjoy staying in the residential provision and are making good progress with their individual goals.
- Relationships between staff and children are positive, established and trusting. The quality of these relationships benefits children, especially in helping them to behave positively and develop self-confidence.
- The arrangements for helping children to join the school and residential provision remain excellent. Children are provided with bespoke transition plans that meet their needs exceptionally well.
- Safeguarding matters are dealt with effectively. Risk is managed well and staff work hard to keep children safe.
- Staff consult well with children about ways to improve their residential experience.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Although staff have debrief discussions about incidents in which restraint is used, the quality of records about these discussions varies, as some are not always of consistently good quality.
- Currently, some policies listed on the school's website are out of date. While leaders have reviewed these policies, the revised versions have not been added to the website promptly.
- Staff receive regular supervision and appraisals of their performance. However, the quality of these sessions varies, as does the information recorded about these sessions.
- Staff are provided with a range of face-to-face and online training courses. However, some staff said that this training does not always meet their own development targets. In addition, not all care staff have achieved a level 3 care qualification.
- The current arrangements for providing meals for children in the residential provision require improvement. Staff are preparing and cooking meals in the food technology classroom and carrying hot food a considerable distance through doors and down stairs. In addition, this arrangement does not provide children with a domestic-style kitchen in which to develop and practise their independence skills.

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

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of debrief discussions held with staff about the use of restraint and ensure that the records of these discussions are consistently of good quality and are useful.
- Improve the quality of supervision and appraisal that staff receive. In addition, ensure that the records of these sessions are consistently detailed to show how the supervisor has responded to the staff member's feedback.
- Undertake a review of staff training needs to ensure that staff are provided with the training they require, and that this training meets their development objectives. In addition, increase the number of staff who successfully achieve a level 3 qualification.
- Update the website to ensure that updated policies are added to this site promptly.
- Review the arrangements that are currently in place for cooking meals for children in the residential provision.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children like staying in the residential provision and they benefit from the opportunities and experiences they have during their stays. Children spoke to the inspector positively about the staff who look after them, confirming that they feel well cared for. Children said that they can talk to any of the staff about anything that worries them; they feel listened to and valued.

Children receive good-quality care from a dedicated and child-focused staff team. The children benefit from being able to access a range of in-house therapy provisions. The therapy team works cohesively across the school and with children's families to provide a consistent approach to therapeutic care. Parents spoke highly of this valuable resource.

A continuing strength of the school is the quality of the support provided in order to help children to join the school and the residential provision. This transition process is fully tailored to the needs of the child and their family. Helping children to join the school can take considerable time because it is completed at a pace that suits the children and their individual needs; this approach has proven to be very effective. One of the many examples of this excellent work includes support given to a child who was very anxious about undertaking the journey between home and the school. The staff developed a book for the child containing photographs of landmarks found on the journey and information about the remaining journey time left to complete. This exceptional piece of work has led to the child's anxieties being greatly reduced, and to them successfully coming into school.

Since the previous inspection, the playground has been revamped and now provides children with a safe and fun place to play. Children have fun when staying in the residential provision. They can pursue their own interests as well as try new activities, including a wide range of activities in the local community. Parents said that the range of activities provided for children is a strength of the school and enables the children to have the same opportunities as other young people.

Children are making progress in their educational development. For some of the children, this is the first time in a long while that they have regularly attended school and joined in with lessons. One child said that they had been to a lot of different schools before coming here. The child told the inspector that the reason he attended school regularly here and joined in with lessons was because 'they get me, here'.

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

Children are kept safe because staff accurately understand and effectively implement the safeguarding procedures. Staff understand children's individual needs and manage risks well. They identify effective ways of reducing risks. Recruitment of new staff and health and safety are dealt with effectively and in accordance with policies

and procedures.

Children feel safe at the school. This is because of the strength of the relationships they have with the staff. Staff have worked hard to establish and maintain trusting and caring attachments with the children. The children feel confident that they can express themselves and their feelings in a safe and nurturing environment.

Behaviour is managed well because staff understand the reasons for children's behaviour and use positive reinforcement, praise and appropriate boundaries effectively. As a result, children are making good progress with being able to self-regulate their behaviours and restraint is rarely used. Managers talk with children and staff who have been involved in or witnessed an incident. This good practice is not captured well in all of the records kept about the discussions held with staff. Some records do not show that some staff have had good-quality debrief discussions.

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

Monitoring of the residential provision takes place regularly. The findings from this monitoring have enabled leaders and managers to assess the performance of the residential provision and devise a plan to develop it further. The current care coordinator is new to the role. She is keen to learn, is ambitious for the children and the staff team, and is working hard to improve the service.

Staff receive supervision and appraisals of their performance regularly. However, the quality of this provision is variable. Records of some sessions demonstrate very good-quality supervision and show that supervisors appropriately address practice issues and provide staff with an opportunity to reflect on their work. Records of other sessions do not show that supervisors have responded to and addressed issues raised by staff.

Feedback about the quality of training provided for staff is mixed. Some staff who have worked at the school for a long period of time told the inspector that they would like more training that is appropriate to their own personal development needs and current skill sets. Other staff said that they requested this training and received it. Training records are not up to date, as they fail to document all of the training that staff have received. Not all care staff have completed a level 3 care qualification as required.

The communication between care, education and waking night staff requires improvement to ensure that important information is consistently shared. The care coordinator has identified this as an area for improvement, and has devised a new handover format to address the weakness. This work is yet to be embedded into practice.

Overall, the website provides some useful information about the school and

residential provision. However, some policies on the website are out of date. While leaders and managers have revised these policies, amended versions have not been uploaded onto the website promptly.

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: SC033014

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ms Sarah Acland

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector



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