

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The children and young people enjoy their residential experience because they make friends and have fun.
- The children and young people's complex health needs are well managed.
- The children and young people enjoy exceptional relationships with staff.
- The children and young people learn a range of life skills, which helps to build their independence.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- The children and young people respond well to the structure and routine.
- The children and young people's behaviour is well managed with consistent boundaries.
- Oversight and monitoring of the quality of care, by the independent visitor and the board of governors, are good.
- The heads of care ensure that the children and young people's choice is at the heart of care practice.
- The staff receive regular supervision which helps them to feel supported.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Ensure that all children and staff have taken part in a residential fire drill. This will inform children's personal evacuation plans.

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

Recommendations

- Strengthen links between academic and residential staff.
- Ensure that all children and staff have taken part in a residential fire drill. This will inform children's personal evacuation plans.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children and young people enjoy staying in the residential accommodation. The children and young people have fun with the staff and this helps to build excellent relationships between the staff and the children and young people. The staff have a good understanding of each of the children and young people's complex needs. The staff tailor the children and young people's care plans to make sure they meet each individual child and young person's specific needs.

The children and young people's life experience grows because of the activities they undertake. The children and young people take part in a range of activities which enhance their social skills and confidence, such as trips to the beach, going shopping, and attending a youth club. Some of the children and young people try new experiences for the first time, such as spa nights.

The children and young people's independence skills develop. The children and young people learn a range of independence skills such as bathing, brushing their teeth and dressing. The children and young people make good progress developing their life skills. The children and young people learn the skills needed to make friends, sit with others, attend local social groups and access the local shops and cafes. One parent commented: '[My child's] progress has been excellent. It's more than just a school; she has made so much progress with friendships. It's an excellent opportunity for social interaction.'

The children and young people enjoy attending the school. The on-site educational provision supports the children and young people to transition into school smoothly. The children and young people make educational progress from their starting points. Joint working between the school staff and the residential staff is not yet consistent. This could hinder the opportunity to reinforce learning for the children and young people in both school and the residential accommodation.

The children and young people receive good all-round healthcare. The children and young people's emotional well-being is well supported because the staff are trained to manage children and young people's anxieties. The children and young people receive good physical health support. A variety of specialist professionals train the staff to meet children and young people's individual health needs. The specialist professionals the staff work with include the school nurse, epilepsy nurse, and occupational therapist.

Transitions for children and young people moving on are well planned. The staff work with future places to live and families to help the children and young people move on as smoothly as possible. One social worker commented: 'The staff are heavily involved in supporting the family and the new placement. We could not ask for any more in terms of how supportive they have been.'

The children and young people's confidence improves as their communication skills develop. The children and young people are encouraged to communicate in a variety of ways to suit their individual needs. This includes the use of sign language and symbols.

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

Procedures to keep the children and young people safe are effective. Recent safeguarding training delivered by local authority specialists refreshed the staff team's knowledge of safeguarding procedures. The training also provided the staff with wider knowledge about additional issues that could affect the children and young people, such as criminal and sexual exploitation.

The children and young people become less anxious because of the consistency of routines. The staff use their strong relationships with the young people to manage any behavioural challenges. Consequently, no physical intervention has been recorded since the time of the last inspection.

The staff have a good knowledge of each individual and what presents a risk to them. There are up-to-date risk assessments in place, giving staff actions to follow to manage individual risks to the children and young people's safety.

Regular fire drills take place in the residential accommodation. Recording of fire drills does not always clearly identify which children, young people and staff have taken part. This is hindering the staff in identifying any issues a child or young person may have when evacuating the residential provision in an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The heads of care model a child-centred approach which values the children and young people's opinions. The heads of care promote a very nurturing approach towards the children and young people. The staff team follows this way of working. One parent commented, 'The staff always make sure the children always come first, that's what makes the difference.'

Developments in the composition of the governing body are providing stronger monitoring and oversight of the residential provision. The board of governors is committed to driving forward improvements in the residential provision and sustaining them. The governors are not afraid to challenge school leaders in order to do this. The independent visitor is helping the governors and leaders of the school to monitor practice in the residential setting. This enables the heads of care to understand their strengths and identify areas of development.

The heads of care track children's progress using their independent learning plans. The use of the independent learning plans helps the heads of care to focus the children and young people's learning and it ensures that the children and young people continue to make good progress with their social and independence skills.

Developing strategies to improve consistency in the children and young people's social targets between the residential provision and school are an ongoing area for improvement.

The staff feel supported by the heads of care. They receive regular supervision which helps them to reflect on their care practice and children and young people's needs. The staff are listened to by the heads of care, and the staff feel they can approach the heads of care at any time for support.

The residential provision is achieving its stated aims and objectives. The residential provision is providing an opportunity for the children and young people to improve their communication skills and increase their self-advocacy. The residential provision provides a nurturing environment which is preparing the children and young people with the skills they need for later life.

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: SC041487

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Colin Bradshaw

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Inspector

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