

Gretton School

Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0RX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Gretton school is a privately owned, independent residential special school for pupils aged between five and 19. Located on the outskirts of Cambridge, the school specialises in teaching children and young people who have autism spectrum disorder conditions. The residential accommodation is provided in three houses and one bungalow located on the school site. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2018.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 February 2019

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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:

- Children have formed positive relationships with the staff and each other.
- The staff listen to children's views and wishes.
- Staff encourage children to develop their independence skills.
- There is good communication between the staff.
- The staff work effectively with other agencies.
- Parents are very happy with the level of care provided to their children. They cite excellent progress for their children that is directly attributable to the residential provision.
- The quality of individualised care is good.
- Allegations and concerns are managed effectively. Advice is sought in a timely way.
- The residential provision is settled because staff set consistent and clear boundaries and routines.
- Staff monitor relationships between the children and work with them to address any potential issues. Incidents are well managed, and recording is clear.
- The head of care and school principal work effectively together, ensuring good communication between the school and residential staff.
- The dedicated core staff work well together and communicate effectively.
- Training is overseen by the quality assurance manager to monitor any gaps.
- External independent monitoring visits are regular. The monitoring reports are comprehensive.
- The head of care is improving the internal monitoring of care practice.
- Children have clear and gradual transition plans in line with their needs.
- The staff support children to move on from the residential provision to their chosen career and college options.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Children's progress is not always clearly documented. Some records are not dated and some are missing information.
- Safeguarding records are not clear. Some records lack evidence of action taken and how risks are managed in the residential provision.
- The independent visitor for the children has not undertaken regular visits to the residential provision.
- Some risk assessments are not routinely dated and do not demonstrate how risks have reduced or increased over time.

- The children's guide is comprehensive, but it does not accurately reflect the names of the current staff. The statement of purpose is also out of date.
- Some of the records of recruitment require improvement.

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:

- The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (National minimum standards 6.3)
- Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors. (National minimum standards 22.1)

Recommendations

- Ensure that all records relating to safeguarding concerns, staff conduct and the outcomes of referrals to social care are clear, complete and recorded in a timely manner.
- Ensure that all recruitment files clearly show employment histories and explanations for employment gaps.
- Ensure that the children have regular access to an independent visitor who visits the school on a regular basis to build a rapport with the children.
- Ensure that the statement of purpose and the children's guide are updated to fully reflect the recent staffing changes.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their time in the residential provision. They have formed positive relationships with the staff and each other. The children said that the staff are easy to talk to and that they can open up to them. A child said, 'It is much easier to talk to the staff in residential than school. The staff are there when you need them.' Children feel safe and supported when living away from home during the week.

The children recognise that the staff take the time to listen to them and really care about what is going on in their lives. Regular children's meetings cover a variety of topics. During these meetings, the children make active choices about the meals that they would like and the activities that they want to do. Staffing is discussed, so that children know who will be working with them. These regular meetings give children the opportunity to raise concerns and ideas, which staff act on.

Staff encourage the children to develop their independence skills such as cooking, laundry and tidying their rooms. The children do very well with these tasks. The older children cook healthy meals independently most evenings. The staff use incentives to encourage the children with their tasks and targets. Children respond well to being able to earn additional money towards activities each week. The staff readily use praise and encouragement to build children's self-confidence and self-esteem.

Each child has a placement plan. The head of care has reviewed the existing plans. She is implementing a revised version to ensure that each child is at the centre of care planning and to improve the way in which progress is tracked. Children benefit from access to counselling support and key-work sessions. Staff identify changes in children's behaviour and provide support in a timely way.

The staff and managers understand children's individual needs and support the children well to develop their sense of identity. There is good communication between the staff. The staff work effectively with other agencies. Particularly strong multi-agency working has resulted in excellent transition plans to support a young person who has complex needs.

Staff do not clearly record children's progress. Several documents were undated, and some were missing information. There is little information to provide reliable evidence of the impact that staying in the residential provision has on children's academic progress. This has been identified by the principal and the head of care as an area that needs to improve.

Despite a lack of recorded evidence of progress, parents articulated the difference that the residential provision has on their children, such as taking an AS level one year early. Parents comments included:

- 'He has developed his independence skills and has skills that will enable him to go to university. If he was not at this school, I don't think that he could realise his

aspirations to go to university.'

- 'The staff are brilliant. They see the whole child.'
- 'My child has made an immense turnaround. The support is unbelievable.'
- 'Previously, he did no sports and had no interest in activities. Now he is achieving. He is happy, and he has made friends. He goes out for meals and is learning to travel independently. I cannot ask for more.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The system for recording safeguarding concerns relies on a handwritten log with individual paper files for each subsequent entry. The system does not provide a clear overview of safeguarding concerns that relate to the residential provision. It was therefore difficult to ascertain the number of issues since the last inspection.

Allegations and concerns are managed effectively, and advice is sought in a timely way. The principal is making good links with the designated officer, who will be attending a meeting at the school to share information. It is evident that safeguarding concerns are acted on and escalated when required. However, the outcome of actions is not always clearly recorded. This makes it difficult to see what the risks to children are and how they are being managed in the residential provision.

The independent visitor for the children has not undertaken regular visits to the residential provision. This means that he does not have a familiar relationship with the children and does not know them well. This could prevent children from contacting him if they have concerns that they wish to raise with someone other than the staff.

There have been no physical interventions or significant sanctions since the last inspection. This reflects how settled the residential provision is and the success of consistent and clear boundaries and routines. No children go missing from the residential provision. When children occasionally walk off site, staff are vigilant and follow them to ensure that they are safe and return quickly.

Children are safe. Safeguarding is a priority for the staff. The head of care has spent some time improving the children's risk assessments. These assessments identify the child's behaviours and potential triggers and how these are to be managed. However, some risk assessments were not dated and did not demonstrate how risks have reduced or increased over time.

Policies are in place to counter bullying. Staff monitor relationships between the children and work with them to address any potential issues. Incidents are well managed, and recording is clear. The management of these incidents demonstrates that staff know the children well and make every effort to support, calm and talk to them when they are in distress. Relevant information is passed on appropriately to the school staff, so that they can provide follow-up support in the classroom.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, a new head of care has been appointed. She is an experienced manager with several years of management experience and is suitably qualified. A new principal oversees the school and the residential provision.

The head of care and principal work together effectively to ensure good communication between the school and the residential staff. The head of care and principal continue to identify strengths and weaknesses and are implementing service development plans to improve the service.

Dedicated core staff work well together and communicate effectively. New staff joining the team have comprehensive induction and are well supported. Supervisions take place regularly and are meaningful. Staff said that they feel well supported and really enjoy working in the residential provision.

Training is overseen effectively by the quality assurance manager to monitor any gaps. The staff are making progress towards achieving a suitable level 3 qualification. The head of care regularly assesses the competency of the staff to administer medication. The training and oversight ensure that staff have the skills that they need to fulfil their roles and to develop professionally.

Since the last inspection, the quality of visits to the residential provision by an independent person has improved, as have the records of the visits. The visits are regular and the reports are comprehensive. The findings of each visit are discussed and reviewed with the head of care to ensure that any suggested actions are addressed in a timely way. This ensures ongoing improvement.

The head of care is working to improve the internal monitoring and review of care practice. She is improving systems and ensuring that staff complete a level 3 qualification in a timely way. Her primary focus is improving the evidence of the children's progress and achievements to enable analysis of the information and demonstrate the impact of the residential provision.

The head of care shares information effectively with other agencies. She works in partnership with external professionals to support children and meet their individual needs.

The staff support children to move on from the residential provision to their chosen career and college options. Children have good access to support that continues after they have left the residential provision. The children maintain contact with the staff after they have left, which reflects the value that children put on their time at the school.

The children's guide is comprehensive but does not accurately reflect the names of the current staff. The statement of purpose is also out of date.

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: SC425708

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ms Zoe Kirby

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Inspector

Debbie Young, social care inspector (lead)



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