

Aurora Eccles School

Eccles, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 2NZ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Aurora Eccles School is an independent residential special school for pupils aged between four and 19. Residential accommodation is offered to pupils aged eight years and above. There are 146 children on roll, six of whom reside at the school on a weekly or full-time basis and three of whom access the service on an ad hoc basis. The residential accommodation is provided in one building that is split into two houses in the grounds. The school is situated in rural Norfolk, between Norwich and Thetford. The school caters for children who have a specific learning difficulty, and/or social and/or communication difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in June 2018.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 June 2019

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 12 June 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The staff and managers have worked hard to address the issues that were identified at the last inspection. As a result, there have been some improvements. However, this inspection identified further shortfalls in response to two safeguarding issues. Consequently, further work is necessary to ensure that children receive good enough help and protection.

Children benefit from a wide-ranging and enhanced clinical service. Care, education and clinical staff work well together. Speech and language therapists work in the residential provision several evenings a week and children engage well with them. In addition, a psychologist offers a range of therapeutic work for children.

The staff encourage children to develop their independence skills. These skills include using public transport and cooking. One child was extremely proud of her new ability to make a cup of tea. Another child was very pleased with his cooking skills and prepared a meal for nine of his peers.

Children make good progress developing their social skills. The school has some limited evidence of children's progress in education. Managers are in the early stages of implementing a new progress and attainment monitoring system.

The use of flexible ad hoc residential stays supports a number of day children with social and independent skills, including some who are at risk of family or placement breakdown. This leads to improvements for these children.

A dedicated nurse oversees the medication arrangements. Strong systems are in place to ensure that staff are skilled in administering medication effectively and safely.

The quality and appearance of the residential provision has improved considerably. The staff involved the children in the redecoration.

Children said that they enjoy the activities on offer. These include ambitious weekend activities such as an overnight trip to London.

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

Most safeguarding concerns are managed well. However, on two occasions managers' responses to concerns relating to domestic abuse have been insufficient. Referrals were not made to the local authority when they should have been. This did not safeguard children.

The quality of safeguarding case records is still not consistently good enough. One case record offered no clarity on the rationale for a significant change in response to a safeguarding concern.

Children feel safe in the residential provision. Children talked about trusted adults to whom they can go when they have worries.

When concerns about staff conduct arise, managers take quick and effective action. Managers share information with the designated officer and keep clear records.

The management team has updated children's risk assessments. These assessments now consider the individual response required should a child go missing.

Behaviour is good in the residential provision. There have been no physical interventions, restraints or incidents of children going missing. The staff help children to stay safe when accessing the internet. The staff address the use of racist and homophobic names through anti-bullying groups and targeted lessons and assemblies.

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

The head of care, her staff and the management team have worked hard to address the issues that were identified at the last inspection. Managers have met the previously unmet national minimum standard and five of the six recommendations.

None of the residential staff have the required level 3 qualification. All are working towards this except for one member of staff who holds a qualification that the management team has decided is equivalent. However, managers have not mapped the qualification to show how it is equivalent. Managers are therefore unaware if this qualification is a suitable alternative.

Managers undertake a range of quality assurance and audit activities. These are positive and contribute to improvements in some areas. However, these activities do not provide enough oversight of safeguarding records. As a result, opportunities to improve practice and coach staff have been missed.

Children's care and support plans reflect their identity and family circumstances. The plans are individualised and track progress.

Communication with families has improved. Managers ensure that regular reports are sent home. Staff share care plans with the families of children who reside at the school full time. Families are generally very positive about the provision.

The management team has improved the learning and development opportunities for staff. Additional training that is relevant to children's needs and experiences is now provided.

An independent person visits the school each half term. The visitor's reports provide a good level of challenge and encourage 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 standard for residential special schools:

- 11.1. The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff and managers understand the effect of domestic abuse on children and how this may affect children's behaviour. In particular, consider how domestic abuse may affect children who have communication difficulties.
- Undertake a mapping exercise to demonstrate the suitability of staff's qualifications and identify any potential gaps in demonstrable competencies and how they will be addressed.
- Monitor and quality assure decision-making that relates to safeguarding and the support that is provided for staff who make those decisions.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC027660

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Chris Brown

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector (lead)

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