

Millgate School

Millgate School, 18 Scott Street, Leicester, LE2 6DW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Millgate School is a maintained residential special school run by Leicester City Council. It caters for boys aged between seven and 16 who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school has a residential facility which can accommodate up to eight children per night. There are also facilities within the residence for children to attend an extended day provision.

Inspection dates: 13 to 16 May 2019

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: 11 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The school continues to provide a nurturing environment that is helping children to achieve their goals, maximise their educational opportunities and develop their social skills. Many of the children have experienced exclusion and/or a disrupted education. They are now making exceptional progress given their starting points.

The high standard of practice and the positive relationships within the school encourage children to achieve their potential. Some children are sitting their exams now, when this would not have been anticipated when they started. Those who stay in residence tend to achieve better long-term results as they start their days more emotionally prepared for the school day and ready to learn.

Children are supported to become well-rounded, purposeful individuals who have a social conscience and empathy for others. This is a particularly positive achievement given some of the children's difficulties. Children are involved in community projects, such as helping a homelessness charity.

Children have the experience of caring for the school's pets, which include a dog, chickens and alpacas. This activity develops a sense of empathy and responsibility as well as caring skills.

Parents spoke very positively about the residential experience and how this had shaped their children's development. One parent said that she was proud of her son and how staff had helped him to become 'an amazing young man'. Parents also spoke positively about improvements in their own families' interactions due to the work of staff.

Children described how their ideas and suggestions are incorporated into extra-curricular planning and activities. This is an example of how the school continually explores creative ways to gather and implement children's wishes and feelings.

Children are well prepared for transitions. This is due to clear planning and goal setting that is linked to their individual targets as set out in their education, health and care plans.

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

Children say that they feel safe and cared for. They know that staff can help them to address any negative behaviours. Staff use a variety of distraction techniques to manage negative behaviour. As the staff know the children extremely well, this enables them to plan and adapt residential stays and activities to ensure that they meet the changeable needs of the children.

Staff work closely with local services to ensure that children have access to support for their emotional health and well-being.

Staff and children work together to look at strategies for when children feel anxious or their behaviours are heightened. These strategies are incorporated into children's individual plans. Staff add any useful information, such as what they have learned from previous incidents with the child. This enables children to develop an understanding of behaviour management strategies and have a say about what they think works best for them. This addresses the sole recommendation made at the last inspection, which related to carrying out a debrief following incidents and using them as learning tools.

The school uses innovative rewards and incentives to help children to understand and address the impact of their behaviours. Children now demonstrate tolerance of others and are less likely to make inappropriate comments. This inspiring focus on the type of adults the children want to become, along with positive role-modelling, is proving very effective.

Children are increasingly able to self-regulate and they are responsive to the clear boundaries and expectations set by staff. A parent described how replicating the consistent boundaries that the staff use with her child is helping her to maintain boundaries and show the child that she is working in partnership with the school.

Children do not go missing. However, staff are aware of the protocols to follow should this occur. Staff are clear about the whistle-blowing process and said that they would have no hesitation in using it should the need arise.

The safeguarding arrangements are thorough and were tested recently when a matter of concern arose. This staffing matter was escalated appropriately, and the relevant follow-up action taken. This included offering support to those involved and reviewing and revising terms and conditions of employment. The learning from this incident has been incorporated into the already comprehensive recruitment process.

Behaviour monitoring and safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive. The electronic system, which is used to log concerns, sends notifications to all relevant parties within school and enables the headteacher to set actions for staff to complete. This personalised accountability ensures that children and their families receive a timely and comprehensive response, that may include a school family support worker visit to the family home.

One of the school governors carries out unannounced visits to assess the residence and the care that the children are receiving. It is commendable that the most recent visit occurred during a weekend.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership team is extremely ambitious for children and ensures that each child learns to recognise how special and unique they are. At the time of the last inspection, the school had just commenced the admission of primary-aged children. These children are now able to have stays in residence and they are clearly benefiting from accessing the provision.

Children's plans clearly demonstrate the children's targets and outcomes and the

steps required to achieve them. Everything planned and put in place in the school prioritises the needs of the children.

Staff say that they feel privileged to be working with the children. They feel that they have regular and relevant training that equips them to do their role. They describe the leadership team as supportive and inspiring, and leaders encourage them to achieve their potential. This is evident in the recent interviews that have led to several internal promotions.

The school is continually developing. This includes adapting the physical space, the service and extra-curricular activities offered. These changes demonstrate that leaders are always striving for positive change.

The school has commissioned external parties to conduct audits regarding aspects of its practice, such as behaviour management, to enable it to ensure that it avoids becoming complacent in its high quality of practice.

Leaders challenge any poor responses in a child-centred manner. They also arrange services in a solution-focused way. This was demonstrated recently when they offered an alternative pattern of stays to ensure that a child had a place to stay during a family crisis. This proactive and responsive approach ensured that this child, and others, do not unnecessarily enter the care system.

Feedback from professionals was extremely positive and indicated positive partnership working. Leaders are happy to share areas of outstanding practice with other providers in order to raise standards locally.

The governors work closely with the leadership team to provide the oversight and challenge of a 'critical friend'. This ensures that the governors have a good overview of all that is going on with the school and the residence. The work is underpinned by theories such as attachment and relationship building, and reflective practice. The result is that children are cared for by committed staff who know them well and genuinely care for them.

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: SC006452

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mark Oldman

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Inspector

Sonia Hay, social care regulatory inspector (lead)



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