

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy

Pettus Road, Norwich NR4 7BU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy is a day and residential special school located in a residential area of Norwich. The school and the accommodation are purpose built. All four residential units are within the school or on the school campus. The Year 4 to Year 8 children board for up to four nights a week from Monday through to Thursday during the school term only. The school currently provides places for 54 boys who have behavioural and/or emotional and/or mental health difficulties. During this inspection, 16 children were boarding on different evenings. The education provision at the school was last inspected in September 2017 and judged as outstanding in all areas. The residential provision was last inspected in April 2018.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 June 2019

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

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

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: 25 April 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The senior leadership team is highly effective. It has high expectations of the children and the staff. The work that senior managers and leaders do to embed research-based practice to improve children's social competence and to promote children's positive well-being is exceptional.

The care team makes significant and positive contributions to the children's lives. The care staff establish excellent relationships with parents and carers. Every day is thoughtfully structured and very well organised to ensure that every child has positive experiences of boarding, regardless of how their behaviour has been at school or at home.

Communication with parents and carers is superb. Admissions are seamlessly planned in partnership with parents, carers and the children. This ensures that the care delivered is personalised and proactively caters for individual needs.

Care staff sit in lessons with the children. Every child improves in their ability to attend education and to engage in learning. All children receive additional help and support after school, for example with reading. This encourages children to enjoy reading and to read independently.

Children benefit from the structure and routine of boarding life. Children participate in a range of fun and interesting activities, organised to take place both in the school grounds and in the local community. This helps children's imagination and curiosity to develop. The children worked with the staff on the design of a project on the effect of manmade pollution and waste on the environment. The project saw children learning about the environment and collecting and recycling waste from a local beach and culminated in a visit to a local Sea Life Centre, where they met conservationists and interacted with sealife. This example of learning in action was an enriching and enjoyable experience for the children. Over and above the weekday routine, staff offer some planned additional weekend activities. This helps to reduce isolation and improve social inclusion.

Every child makes exceptional social and behavioural progress from their starting point. Children develop new skills. They learn empathy and how to interact more successfully with their peers and with adults. Children develop skills in reasoning and negotiation. These are life skills that help to raise self-esteem and confidence.

A nutritious and varied diet helps children to perform well. Freshly made food helps children to feel cared for and nurtured. Older children are helped and encouraged to make some meals. This helps to build skills in preparation for independence. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms, and they have access to comfortable communal areas to relax. However, aspects of the decoration and some play

equipment in three of the residential units are worn and lacklustre. This inconsistency in the presentation of the boarding provision detracts from an otherwise welcoming environment.

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

Children who board are represented on the school council. All children who board readily named at least one trusted adult from the teaching or care staff to whom they can go for help and support.

The staff work with the children on topics, particularly around personal safety and making good decisions. The care staff work proactively with the children, encouraging them to seek help and express their views. This ensures that issues are quickly brought to the attention of one of the 10 designated safeguarding leads at the school. Swift and clear action ensures that all relevant adults and agencies are aware of the issues raised by the children. The result is a culture in which children are encouraged to have their say and to express their opinions.

Physical interventions in residential time are few, and are limited to a small number of children. Parents and carers are informed quickly after each occasion that their child is held. Senior leaders review the records of all physical interventions. Children sit with an independent adult to reflect on every incident and the behaviours of all those involved. The children respond exceptionally well to the highly structured and embedded reward system. The system encourages children to make good choices and helps their behaviour to improve significantly.

Incidents of children going missing during residential time are rare. When incidents happen, the staff are extremely responsive. They work quickly and effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure the rapid and safe return of children to school. Swift action, including the review of management plans, significantly reduces the likelihood of recurrence.

Safeguarding matters are thoroughly addressed and referred to the relevant agencies. Conclusions and actions are clearly documented. The senior leadership team is responsive, and acts on any recommendations from other agencies to improve practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care has been in post for several years. She is suitably qualified, very experienced and skilled in her ability to carry out the role. She is innovative and continually looking for ideas to improve the children's experiences in boarding. The head of care is supported by two dynamic deputy heads of care who, along with senior care staff, ensure that children are involved in their plan and understand the areas in which they are making progress.

Residential life is fully integrated with the school. The admissions policy has been

amended and is more responsive to children's individual circumstances. The leaders and managers take immediate and purposeful action to address any concerns whatsoever. Managers scrutinise, review and quality-assure children's plans. The managers and leaders know individual children's personalities and characters well. This helps to ensure a dynamic approach to achieving children's written goals, targets and plans.

The leaders' and managers' approach to partnership working with other agencies to ensure positive outcomes for children is highly effective. The transparent, multi-agency approach safeguards children and meets their needs.

Staff are very positive about the work that they do and the difference that they make for the children. Changes to staffing have had minimal effect on the children. This is because, since the last inspection, new care staff have been recruited and the number of children in the residential provision has reduced. Staff have been enabled to gradually build their confidence to meet individual children's needs. To be certain that only the most suitable adults are recruited, the same approach to background checks should be used for adults who have worked abroad.

All new care staff benefit from an improved induction. All care staff attend a range of training opportunities, including behaviour management, managing sexually harmful behaviour and safeguarding. Many staff have achieved or are enrolled on the required level 3 qualification. Those staff who are new and waiting to be enrolled on the qualification have begun workforce development training. This approach helps to ensure that all staff are certain about their role and responsibilities to safeguard children and to help children make progress from their unique starting point.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the communal areas provide children with a homely environment.
- Undertake comprehensive recruitment checks for every member of staff, in particular those who have worked abroad.

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: SC038324

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Keith Bates

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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