

Springfield House School

Kenilworth Road, Knowle, Solihull, West Midlands B93 0AJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Springfield House School is a maintained school operated by Birmingham City Council. It is a residential community special school for boys and girls aged four to 11 who have a range of special educational needs. The majority of children have social and/or emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Some children have learning difficulties and some are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The school currently has 96 pupils and is open on weekdays in term time only. The school is in a rural position near Knowle, Solihull, and can accommodate 17 children in The Lodge.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 July 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: 26 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

Staff do not always understand the targets for individual children. Children and parents say that they do not know what their targets are. Care plans are not always followed. For example, staff do not provide some children with the visual timetables that they need in their bedrooms. Staff also lack the training that they need to produce social stories for children. This means that although children make progress, some children are not always receiving the support that they need to make even more progress.

Children have comfortable bedrooms which they can personalise. However, there is some rising damp in the residential provision, which has not been sufficiently addressed. This makes the corridor wall look unpleasant.

Children look forward to staying in the residential provision and value the time that they spend with each other and with staff. They form warm and trusting relationships with child-focused staff.

Staff have recently reinstated the school council, which includes children who use the residential provision. This has a positive impact on the lives of children who have residential stays. They have an opportunity to make requests and can raise any concerns to the senior leadership team. As a result of the school council, children are having a school prom at the end of term and have new swings in the grounds. However, staff do not have a clear system for feeding back to children after these meetings. For example, children have asked for the quality of the food to improve, but there is no record of staff telling them what measures are being taken to address this issue.

Children benefit from a wide range of fun and healthy activities. They love the spacious grounds of the school, which have lots of play equipment including an outdoor gym. They also enjoy activities including skating, going on trips to local parks and participating in theme nights.

Children's behaviour is excellent. Staff are good role models and provide children with firm boundaries that make them feel secure. Children know what is expected of them and show respect for staff and for each other. Many of the care staff also work in the school and the same approach to behaviour management is used in both settings, providing children with consistency and certainty. This helps them to understand and manage their own emotions and behaviour.

Children say that staff listen to them. They feel confident to speak to staff if they are upset or have concerns. They know that there is an independent listener who comes into the school and that they can call him whenever they wish. Children know how to make a complaint if they need to.

Nurturing staff support children with their homework, helping children to increase their academic skills. For example, one young person's spelling marks rapidly increased once he started practising spelling with staff during his residential stays. Parents say that they can see their children's social and independence skills develop because of the support that they receive.

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

There has been a significant reduction in the use of restraint in the residential provision since the spring term. However, on one occasion restraint was used, but not as a last resort. Specifically, a staff member took a child to the 'calm down' area as the child's behaviour was beginning to escalate. The physical intervention was used to prevent escalation rather than utilising other strategies to avoid the need to intervene physically. The principal care coordinator was too accepting of the staff member's practice on the basis that he knew and trusted the staff member. The principal care coordinator does not display an appropriate level of professional curiosity. This places children at risk of poor and inappropriate practice.

When staff have used physical interventions, the principal care coordinator does not use the debrief sessions to consider how staff practice could be improved, and he does not challenge staff. Records of physical interventions sometimes lack clarity and do not state what holds were used. Debriefs of children and staff have been undertaken by staff who took part in the physical intervention. This is not in keeping with the service's policy and does not afford children the chance to discuss the incident with someone independent.

One of the team leaders who administers medication to children has not received training for this task. All medication has been administered correctly. However, the system for recording and accounting for medication in the residential provision is not effective, and staff cannot provide an accurate running total of the drugs on site. Due to a lack of managerial oversight, the principal care coordinator was unaware of this.

Children feel safe when they stay in the residential provision, and vigilant staff keep them safe. Staff are trained in safeguarding, the use of restraint, and in promoting good mental health. They understand how children are vulnerable to exploitation and radicalisation. E-safety training has been arranged and staff follow the school's policy on the safe use of the internet. Children have not gone missing from the residential provision, but staff know how to respond if they do. All staff are currently undertaking training in behaviour management, which emphasises appropriate de-escalation techniques, with physical intervention being used only as a last resort.

Staff help children to understand how to keep themselves safe. As part of their induction into the residential provision, the principal care coordinator explains the new 'Speak up- speak out' system to them. This encourages children to talk about

their concerns to staff and the independent listener. Children have a poster with the photograph and telephone number of the independent listener so that they can contact him themselves.

Recruitment practice is safe and the central register is kept up to date with the details of every individual who spends time with children, including the governors. The residential home and grounds are safely maintained.

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

Several national minimum standards are unmet. The principal care coordinator does not undertake effective managerial monitoring of the systems which support staff and children. For example, he is unclear about which staff are trained in first aid and autism spectrum disorder, as the training matrix is not up to date. Several experienced staff on each shift do have these skills. This limits the impact that this shortfall has.

The principal care coordinator has not ensured that all staff have had appraisals. This prevents them from formally reflecting on their practice and setting objectives for the coming year.

The principal care coordinator does not monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of sanctions. He is unable to identify any concerns that may arise in staff practice or ensure that sanctions are appropriate.

The governor who is responsible for independently monitoring the residential provision has not visited each half term, as required by the national minimum standards. The principal care coordinator has not challenged this lack of oversight. The new residential governor is yet to contact parents to explain her role.

Staff love working with the children. They are dedicated, and child-focused. They speak very positively about the new team leaders, who are supportive and enable staff to better meet the needs of the children. Staff and the new team leaders communicate with school staff, social workers, therapists and parents effectively.

The senior leadership team, which includes the executive headteacher, principal care coordinator, and head of school, has made some positive developments since the last inspection. These include the introduction of the team leader system, which has led to regular updates of care plans, staff supervision and staff meetings. The principal care coordinator has weekly meetings with the team leaders, who are working together on an improvement plan for the residential provision.

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:

- All medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. (National Minimum Standard 3.8)
- Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained. (National Minimum Standard 5.4)
- All children, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety. (National Minimum Standard 8.1)
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the school. (National Minimum Standard 19.1)
- All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (National Minimum Standard 19.6)
- The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who is independent of the management of the school, to visit the school six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the head teacher (or school equivalent). (National Minimum Standard 20.1)
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (National

Minimum Standard 21.1)

Recommendations

- Put in place a system to review and evaluate sanctions.
- Consider asking the new residential governor to contact parents to explain her role.
- Ensure that there is a clear system for feeding back to children after house meetings and student council meetings.
- Review the use of physical interventions to ensure that they are used only as a last resort and that debriefs are undertaken by a person who was not involved in the incident.

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: SC042411

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Miss Kay Reid

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

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