

# Windlestone School

Chilton, Ferryhill, Co Durham DL17 0HP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential special school in Durham. The school has 81 students who are of secondary school age. The children have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. The residential provision belonging to the school can accommodate 20 residential students over two houses. The residential houses are situated in the school grounds. There are currently 15 students who choose to stay in the residential provision. The residential places are flexible, ranging from two to four nights a week, depending on individual need. Residential places seek to develop the children's personal, social and independence skills to support their wider learning and personal development. The school was inspected on 12 and 13 November 2019. The school and the residential inspection were aligned.

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 13 November 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

inadequate

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:** 13 May 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

## Inspection judgements

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

The children state that they like to stay in the residential provision. The children describe their experience in the residential part as being very different to school. The children like the staff and they feel that they can talk to them.

The children learn skills which help them to become more independent. For example, they learn how to cook basic food. The children benefit from the opportunity to socialise with their peers. The social opportunities help to improve the children's social skills and they help the children to form friendships with each other.

As the children's confidence improves, they take the opportunities on offer to try new activities and experiences. The children enjoy going to the farm, swimming, playing snooker and watching films at the cinema. Due to a lack of staff on some occasions, the residential leaders have had to limit the activities on offer to the children.

It is hard to track the level of progress that the children make because the recording systems are complex, incomplete and the staff state that they find them hard to use. Recently, a member of the residential leadership team left and there is a high level of staff sickness across the school and residential provision. This leaves the staff team stretched with little time to complete children's records.

The children have access to specialist services that help to meet their physical and emotional health needs. The services include occupational therapy and the school nurse. The children benefit from the school nurture dog, Mable, who is part of the school community. The children learn to care for her, learning play and socialisation skills. Mable also helps to meet some children's specific needs, supporting them to transition round the school and she motivates others to complete work.

The quality of education is judged inadequate. There are many behaviour incidents in school which impact negatively on children's physical and emotional well-being and learning.

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

The children feel safe and choose to stay over in the residential provision. There is no use of physical intervention. The staff use their positive relationships with the children to manage issues of challenging behaviour. The children do not go missing from the residential units and the staff know how to follow missing procedures if children do go missing from the units.

The arrangements for managing safeguarding concerns are in place and they are imbedding. The introduction of a weekly safeguarding meeting is helping to ensure that safeguarding information is shared between the school and the residential staff.

The designated safeguarding lead is settling into her role. She ensures that the staff

receive the training that they need to recognise wider risks to children such as county lines, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.

The recordings of a serious safety incident do not show a clear timeline of events. The recording does not contain enough detail to demonstrate exactly what action staff took to safeguard the children and at what point. After this incident, a further lack of risk management did not help the children to manage conflict between each other positively. This leaves children at potential risk of harm.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The headteacher is temporarily standing in as the head of care. Two team leaders support him. The manager of the residential provision has recently left, and the result is that the management of the residential provision has not sustained a period of stability in two years.

The lack of stable leadership is delaying the progress of improvement. One national minimum standard is not met from the last inspection. The leaders have made improvement in some areas such as medication storage and administration and in some aspects of safeguarding practice.

The staff do not receive regular supervision or formal appraisal to help them reflect on their role and the care delivered to the children. This lack of management support is affecting the culture within the residential provision and the staff's confidence in carrying out their role.

After a delay, the local authority has recently appointed an interim executive board which replaces the governing body for a period of 12 months. However, the board's work has not yet started. A new independent visitor has been appointed to visit the school to monitor. This means that two ways of monitoring activity across the school and the residential provision are not in place. This potentially affects the care given to children.

The staff are receiving whole-school training to help them understand the children's needs. Specific training to meet the needs of the residential care staff is not yet happening.

## **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:

- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.
- 13.3 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.
- 22.1 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.
- 19.4 The learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness at least annually and is updated if necessary.
- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school.

This is in relation to improving the timeline and general recording of safeguarding incidents,

Also, in relation to staff showing clear decision-making when they make an immediate assessment of risk where necessary to protect all children.

### **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:** SC007615

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Tim Bennett

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01388 720337

**Email address:** t.bennett@durhamlearning.net

## **Inspectors**

Jamie Richardson, social care inspector (lead)

Debbie White, social care inspector (present for one day)



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