

# Wells Park School

Lambourne Road, Chigwell, Essex IG7 6NN

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Wells Park School is a day and residential special school in Chigwell. It is maintained by Essex County Council. The school caters for children aged between five and 11 who have complex emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

There are 52 pupils on roll. The total number of residential pupils is currently 39. Residential pupils board between Monday and Friday for four nights. The residential accommodation is provided in four integrated houses located on the school site.

The residential provision was last inspected in January 2019.

**Inspection dates:** 3 to 5 December 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:** 7 January 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

The staff provide the children with the best possible environment in which to continue to grow into healthy and happy individuals. The children's experiences have an exceptionally positive long-term impact.

The staff share a relentless and ambitious drive to improve children's lives. They have a strong desire to help the children to excel. Each child's potential is readily recognised, quickly achieved and consistently maintained.

The staff have an excellent awareness of the children's backgrounds and the underlying causes that have led to their emotional difficulties and challenging behaviours. The knowledgeable, skilled staff provide support that is highly attuned to the children's needs. The staff's proactive interventions successfully reduce the children's distress, anger and frustration. This tailored support results in the children's increased well-being.

The care team makes a significant contribution to the quality of the children's lives. The children are happy and thoroughly enjoy their time with the staff. Parents and carers gave high praise for the care, consideration and understanding of their children.

The children thrive on the routine and the structure that the staff provide. The school day, evening activities and mealtimes are meticulously planned. An excellent range of resources ensures that the children are engaged and occupied at all times. This provides the children with a sense of security, purpose and belonging.

The staff work hard to ensure that the children have positive experiences throughout the school day and in residential time. The staff play with the children rather than just supervising them. This creates a family-like environment that is nurturing and filled with warm exchanges. The children engage in forest school, help out on a farm and enjoy outdoor learning. This develops the children's curiosity and helps them to discover their preferred learning style. The staff excel at meeting the children's individual needs.

Every child improves in their ability to engage in learning. Individual targets in children's education, care and health plans are swiftly met. Regular reviews of the children's plans enable the staff to revise the provision of support responsively and tailor this accordingly. Some of the children have experienced exclusions from other education provisions and spent significant time out of full-time education. Despite this, the children make significant academic progress. This re-engagement at school has prevented the children from being socially isolated and increased their self-worth and confidence.

The children learn many new skills, including how to empathise with others. The staff are exceptional role models and advocates for the children. Consequently, the children learn how to get along with others and deal with their differences and disappointments. The children develop social awareness and learn valuable interpersonal skills. This provides them with a foundation for personal growth and learning.

The children's bedrooms are attractively designed, with modern furnishings. Children's artwork and photographs adorn almost every wall. This gives the children a sense of belonging and pride in their achievements. The communal areas are warm, inviting and child-friendly. The staff have made great efforts to create an environment that nurtures the children both physically and emotionally.

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

The staff make safeguarding the children their highest priority. The children are safe and feel safe at the school. Children spoken with during the inspection could all name a member of staff with whom they would speak if they felt worried. The families spoken with said both that the staff take safeguarding seriously and that they feel very confident that their children are safe.

The recent appointment of a psychotherapist has helped to develop the staff's understanding of child development and child attachment theory. Senior staff benefit from allocated time with the psychotherapist to discuss the children's behaviours and needs. This clinical oversight enhances the staff's practice and provides a bespoke approach to the children's care.

The staff understand the importance of the children having new and meaningful experiences while learning how to safely manage risk. High-quality risk assessments help the staff to provide the children with opportunities to experience activities safely. The children learn to manage risk in accordance with their age, understanding and ability. Consequently, they benefit from exciting experiences in a safe environment.

The staff have a comprehensive understanding of how to raise safeguarding concerns. When concerns are identified, the designated safeguarding lead promptly shares these with the appropriate authorities and seeks professional advice. The staff follow advice and work well with external professionals to safeguard the children's welfare.

The staff very rarely use restraint and only to protect and safeguard the children. The senior leadership team reviews the records of any restraints weekly, compiling a thematic analysis of why the children have been involved in a restraint. This identifies themes and trends and enables reflection that helps the staff to reduce the need for further physical intervention.

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

The leadership of the residential provision is exceptional. The leadership team remains enthused about and committed to improving the children's experiences. Leaders and managers strive to continually develop and improve the service. Consequently, the children flourish and make excellent progress.

A knowledgeable, inspirational management team leads the residential provision. Managers have high aspirations for the children and the staff, striving for continuous growth and positive change. The management team has embedded a strong culture of excellence that is embraced by the staff. Leaders and managers have a considerable understanding of the progress and experience of each child in the school.

The senior leadership team has an innovative and creative vision for the school. This is underpinned by a clear theoretical understanding and approach that is shared by the whole staff team. The staff are trained in social pedagogy, transactional analysis and trauma perceptive practice. This vision and training contribute to a skilled, superior workforce that has an informed understanding of the children's presenting behaviours.

The staff said that their views are valued and acknowledged by the senior leadership team. The staff actively contribute their ideas. There is a whole-school approach to meeting the children's diverse needs.

The communication between the education staff and the care staff is seamless. All the staff have a shared understanding of each child's day. The staff work collaboratively and collectively to look for solutions to any issues that arise. This creatively addresses barriers to the children's learning and development.

The senior leadership team has reviewed and monitored the children's admissions and transitions from the school. This information has been used to improve the children's experiences. The senior leadership team has worked closely with the psychotherapist to ensure that the children in their final school year are fully prepared for their next placement. All the staff recognise that children who have attachment difficulties need sustained and concentrated support to have a positive experience of leaving school and embracing the future.

## **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:** SC018021

**Headteacher:** Matthew Surman

**Strategic director:** Carol Mitchell

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 0208 502 6442

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### **Inspectors**

Trish Palmer: social care inspector (lead)

Lianne Bradford: social care inspector



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