

Cedar House School

Cedar House School, Bentham, Lancaster LA2 7DD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Cedar House School is an independent, specialist day and residential school. The school meets the needs of a diverse group of children. The children have a range of complex needs, including social, emotional and mental health difficulties, alongside a range of other associated conditions. There are currently 72 children on the school roll, aged between seven and 18 years. Seventeen children live in four self-contained residential houses adjacent to the school site. The school is on the North Yorkshire-Lancashire border. The boarding provision and the school were last inspected on 12 to 14 February 2019.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 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: 12 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children flourish in an environment where they have very strong relationships with the staff team. The children make excellent progress in all areas of their development. The staff team knows each child exceptionally well and the staff use their knowledge to tailor individual care to meet the children's complex needs.

The children benefit from a seamless approach between school staff and residential staff. Effective delivery of the 24-hour curriculum continually reinforces the children's learning. The range of resources in the school grounds, such as the small animal farm, polytunnel and beauty/hairdressing room, enhances the children's learning experience. The activities the children complete in the evenings contribute towards qualifications that prepare them well for when they leave. The children are extremely proud of their achievements. One child commented: 'I could never have done this before I came here. I have more confidence to do everything now.'

Over time, the children develop social skills, self-belief and self-worth. The staff support the children to undertake community and charity work, and this encourages the children to look outside their own lives and into the lives of others. For some children, given their own needs, this is significant progress. The community projects the children undertake include making and hanging winter bird-feeders in the local area. Other charity projects include filling socks with essential items for homeless people, running a soup delivery service for the homeless, raising money for a cancer charity, and baking mince pies for a home for the elderly.

The children's emotional well-being significantly improves by attending the residential service. The children benefit from accessing a range of support from the school's clinical services team, which provides tailored care to meet children's complex needs. In addition, the children benefit from working with the school's nurse, who carries out specialist work to enable them to be as independent as possible. This includes teaching some children how to self-medicate. Other children achieve being able to accept taking their medication for the first time.

The children are exceptionally well prepared for when they leave the school, and they all go on to further education. The children learn a range of life skills that prepare them well for independence, including travelling on public transport, doing their laundry and telling the time. They gain qualifications for their achievements. Once the children have learned the skills at school, the staff take this a step further and support the children to be able to transfer their skills into their home lives. Using their skills independently at home makes an exceptional difference to the lives of children and their families.

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

The designated safeguarding lead is passionate about his role. The staff follow his approach to safeguarding and they are quick to identify and act on signs of risk. The

designated safeguarding lead continually reinforces the staff's knowledge of safeguarding procedures.

The risks to children reduce, resulting in improvement to their lives in school and at home. When there are concerns for children, the designated safeguarding lead is persistent in following through issues. He monitors the actions of other services and holds them to account. As a result, the children and their families get the support they need.

The children's anxieties reduce, and their behaviour improves. The children benefit from their own team of support around them. The children are fully involved in the team meetings, which help them devise strategies to manage their emotions positively. Innovative strategies include the use of positive books and self-designed posters of strategies children refer to in crisis to lessen their anxiety.

The staff use their intricate knowledge of the children to pick up on the signs that they are becoming upset. The staff are quick to use positive strategies to help children before they reach crisis point. Physical intervention is a last resort to keep the children and staff safe.

The staff undertake a range of training that helps them to identify risks to the children. The training manager is proactive in researching current risks that children could face, such as sexual and criminal exploitation. She ensures that staff receive training about these risks to enable them to identify and spot the early behaviour signs.

The children's risks reduce as they become more aware of dangers. They learn how to recognise danger and how to keep themselves safe. The children gain qualifications for their safety learning. The qualifications they have include first aid, county lines, road safety, staying safe on social media, anti-bullying and the risks associated with absconding.

Incidents of bullying are rare. When bullying does occur, staff act immediately to stop any further occurrence. The anti-bullying coordinator works together with a group of children who are anti-bullying buddies. The anti-bullying group meets regularly to discuss any concerns and increase their knowledge of bullying, and they actively work around school to raise awareness of the issue.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leaders are highly ambitious and committed to continually improving the quality of service for the children. The leaders promote a totally child-centred approach to care planning. They are proactive in researching new projects which enhance the children's learning experience. The staff team mirrors this highly ambitious approach. The staff are keen and confident to bring in new creative ideas to keep improving the quality of care and progress for the children. The school has been nominated for a national award for outstanding outcomes for the children. In addition, the school has recently received excellent feedback from an external service, for its outstanding, sustained improvement in positive behaviour support.

The leaders ensure that the children continue to progress. The leaders have clear

tracking systems that enable any issues to be quickly identified and addressed. The leaders know where the strengths of the service are, and they are clear about the areas they wish to develop. However, the development plan for the residential service does not consistently evaluate its current position and does not fully outline in all areas any next actions. This means that the leaders could potentially miss new opportunities for improvement.

The school board is highly effective in supporting the leaders of the residential service to drive improvements forward. The school board scrutinises residential practice, offering a balance of robust challenge and praise. The school board ensures that all staff views and ideas are listened to and where possible acted upon.

The highly motivated staff team thrives in a positive culture of praise and reward for their efforts. The staff feel very well supported by the school leaders and the company. The staff receive reflective supervision, which gives them the confidence to undertake their roles to the best of their abilities.

The leadership team maintains excellent relationships with other professionals, and works in partnership with other services, such as the police and social care, to ensure that the children and their families receive the right service. The leaders are strong advocates for the children. They actively challenge other professionals and escalate concerns until the children and their families receive the help they need.

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

Recommendations

- Consider improving the recording of the development plan, including details of staff training. Consistently record the impact and learning from developments and next steps in moving the service forward.

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: SC040058

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Kathryn Taylor

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Jamie Richardson, social care inspector



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