

Gretton School

Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0RX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Gretton school is a privately owned, independent residential special school for pupils aged between five and 19. Located on the outskirts of Cambridge, the school specialises in teaching children and young people who have autism spectrum disorder conditions. The residential accommodation is provided in four houses and one bungalow located on the school site. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2019. This inspection took place at the same time as the education inspection.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 January 2020

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 5 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a good residential provision. The children have strong relationships with the staff, who know them well. A consistent theme in feedback from children and their families was how the staff understand the children. The strength of these relationships underpins the good progress that the children make.

The children enjoy their time in the residential provision. They said that there is a good balance between social activities and down time. The staff understand what motivates and interests the children. Social activities provide opportunities for learning and development. This contributes to the children making good progress with their social and emotional skills.

The staff support the children to attend external clubs and activities. This boosts the children's confidence and self-esteem and their ability to interact with people outside the protected confines of the school. This progress is significant for the children. A social worker said of one child, 'The staff have really helped him to turn his life around. They have been pivotal. He is building friendships, which for him is huge. Up until going to the residential provision, he would not identify as having friends and now he does, and that is incredibly important.'

The staff help the children to develop their practical independence skills, such as using washing machines and public transport. Parents said that the children can transfer these newly acquired skills to the home environment.

Residential staff also work at the school. They have a good understanding of children's education needs. Children who were previously out of education for substantial periods of time are now engaging positively at school and taking examinations. One child, who is now applying to go to university, said, 'Coming here has meant that I have achieved things that I would not have thought possible.'

The children experience well-organised transitions into the residential provision. Introductions are planned between children, professionals and families and occur at a pace that is right for the child. As a result, these introductions are consistently successful.

Children have support plans in place. These plans are in a new format and are generally clear. They are written in plain language and written with the children. However, the plans do not give enough consideration to issues relating to mental capacity. This risks the staff lacking clarity on this relevant issue.

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

Children feel safe in the residential provision. They can raise concerns with the staff. The staff understand the children well and are alert to changes in behaviour and what these may indicate.

No children have gone missing from the residential provision. The children said that bullying is not an issue.

The staff understand that any use of restraint is a last resort. The staff were able to explain how they support the children and de-escalate behaviour. Physical interventions have only been used twice since the last inspection. On both occasions, these interventions were short and proportionate and helped the children to stay safe.

The residential staff are clear about the procedures for raising concerns. Responsible staff link with the designated officer promptly and effectively if concerns arise.

Recruitment records have improved. Recruitment files now clearly show employment histories and explanations for employment gaps. This evidences safe recruitment processes that protect children.

Risk assessments are in place. However, these do not sufficiently consider the approach to managing internet access in the residential provision. In addition, the school policy on mobile devices does not consider the residential provision. The residential staff may therefore not be clearly guided on how to support the children to access the internet safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced head of care provides strong and effective leadership. She is respected by the staff, the children and the wider management team. She has a realistic view of the quality of the provision, its strengths and the areas that need to improve.

The head of care has an excellent understanding of the children. She can describe their needs and how these are to be met in great, reflective detail. She uses this knowledge to support the children to engage in activities, such as this inspection, that they would not otherwise be able to participate in.

The staff have all received regular supervisions. This includes the head of care, who also receives clinical supervision. The staff have access to a range of training courses. All the staff have undertaken training in safeguarding and understanding radicalisation. The management team has arranged for additional training as necessary. Consequently, the staff feel supported and well guided.

A regularly reviewed development plan identifies the areas for improvement. The head of care has made and sustained improvements to the quality of care. She has met the previously unmet national minimum standards and addressed previous recommendations for improvement.

The leadership team is unafraid to challenge local authorities and advocate on the children's behalf. Feedback from external professionals about the quality and flexibility of the residential provision is positive. Families, in the main, are also positive about the residential provision.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that there is a whole-school approach to and a clear policy and risk assessment on the use of mobile technology and, in particular, internet-enabled devices, during residential time.
- Ensure that care or support plans give due consideration to issues relating to mental capacity and deprivation of liberty.

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: SC425708

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Ian Thorsteinsson

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector (lead)

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