

Cloughwood Academy

Cloughwood Academy, Stones Manor Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1NU
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Cloughwood Academy is a purpose-built day and residential special academy. It is located within extensive grounds on the Mid Cheshire Campus in Hartford. The academy caters for male children between the ages of eight and 18 years. There are currently 65 children on roll. The academy provides extended days and residential places during term time. There are eight residential places with 17 boys accessing the provision Monday to Thursday. This school is closed at weekends and during school holidays.

There is an acting head of care who is suitably qualified and is currently mid-way through a level 5 leadership and management qualification. She has been in post since September 2018.

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 January 2020

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 **good**

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: 11 December 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Residential children receive excellent individualised care and support to meet their changing needs. They love the 'sleepovers' in the residential unit. The staff are successful in forming highly positive relationships with the children. As a result, children make exceptional progress as they learn to trust the staff and listen to the advice and guidance they give them. Progress is made in areas that include social skills, life skills and improving behaviours.

Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for children. This means that children make exceptional progress towards achieving their goals. Research-based practice is rooted into their day-to-day work, which has a significant impact on children's progress. For example, the Lego education programme has allowed children to use building blocks to help regulate their emotions.

The promotion of children's independence is integral to their experience in the residential setting. Parents spoken to expressed their delight that their child could now wash and dress themselves independently. Staff take every opportunity to encourage and support these important skills within a fun and relaxed setting.

The residential children have a clear and strong voice at the school and are encouraged to air their views and feelings. Children said that they enjoy their time at the school and the residential experience. They are very positive about the range of activities on offer and tell of experiences that they would not have had without the residential provision. For one child, the opportunity to join a gymnasium has recently led to him winning a silver medal in a competition after the coach spotted his talent during a visit with the residential children. The recording of individual targets to demonstrate progress has improved since the last inspection. However, there is a need to improve further.

The health arrangements for the residential children are excellent. Health is overseen by a school nurse who visits the school regularly. The care staff are highly effective at monitoring children's health needs and at ensuring that they have the appropriate support. Through liaising closely with parents and carers, the staff have the necessary detailed knowledge of the children's medical conditions and medication requirements. Medicines are administered safely, and good processes are in place.

The residential accommodation is in general of a very good standard, although some areas, particularly the bedrooms, lack any personal identity. Children like their living accommodation and enjoy the time spent in their 'dorms'. There is plenty of sensory equipment and information technology, which benefit the children's enjoyment and communication.

Children receive a comprehensive induction into the residential provision. Induction starts with an extended day, during which the child joins in the activities and stays for tea. This is gradually lengthened until the child is comfortable enough to stay overnight.

The residential care plan is not detailed enough to provide staff with the information they need to provide high-quality care for children, particularly around risks and the cultural identity of a child. While this is known, and the programme of activities considers these areas, they are not recorded sufficiently.

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

The residential children said that they feel safe and reported that they can easily talk to the staff if they have any concerns. One parent said, 'As an only child, he gets to mix with others. He won't stay over with family but loves going to resi [residential provision] because he feels safe and secure.' Several residential children who spoke to the inspector feel that the residential provision is a safe space, that their privacy is respected and that they are not subject to bullying. They said that the best thing about 'resi' was 'the staff!'

Behaviour in the residential provision is exceptionally good. Staff implement clear rules that the children understand and follow. Staffing levels are high. Therefore, children are very well supervised. Children feel safe and secure.

Child protection procedures are known and understood by all staff. Regular training, including up to level two safeguarding, ensures that staff remain up to date with current safeguarding concerns such as child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. This helps to keep children safe. Vetting procedures help to protect children from unsuitable adults.

The staff are familiar with the procedures they should follow when they have concerns for a child's welfare. Concerns are promptly shared with the designated lead for safeguarding, and consultations or referrals to the relevant safeguarding agencies are appropriately made. This has resulted in challenges by the school with the local authority when the school felt that social services needed to step up their involvement, resulting in children and families receiving early help services from their local authorities.

The use of physical restraint is rare and proportionate, and it is only implemented by trained staff. The children confirmed that if they are involved in a restraint they have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the incident with a member of staff.

Health and safety matters are organised well, and systems are in place to monitor and ensure that all health and safety matters are addressed appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The school has seen changes in its head of care since the last inspection. The previous head of care was dismissed, and an acting head of care has been appointed. The headteacher has managed the changes well, with no negative impact on the residential experiences of the children. The school has continued to run smoothly and continues to provide a happy environment for the pupils. The acting head of care is ambitious and passionate about her new role and is being mentored by the headteacher while she gains experience in the role.

Leaders and managers with responsibilities for the residential provision are passionate and highly committed to ensuring that the children have a very positive experience at the school. Staff set high standards of child-centred care. They have substantial relevant experience and are highly effective. The whole staff team knows the children well, develops warm and friendly relationships with them and promotes an atmosphere of happiness, achievement and positivity.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. They quickly address identified shortfalls. They strive to continually improve the service by using research and highly effective monitoring systems. Governors provide exceptional support and challenge. They are knowledgeable and passionate.

Staff work in partnership with parents and external professionals. This means that children receive a well-organised package of care and education. Parents are very positive about the care that their children receive. They say that the residential provision provides huge benefits for their children. One parent said, 'He is like a different child now.'

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

Recommendations

- Celebrate and explore the culture and identity of each child within the residential care plans and in bedrooms.
- Further improve risk assessments so that they accurately reflect the individual behavioural and health needs of children prior to and during their stays in the residential provision.
- Develop individual targets further to link better with behavioural and social issues associated with each child and monitor to review the progress that is being made.

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: SC006625

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Adrian Larkin

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Inspectors

Elaine Clare, social care inspector (lead)

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