

Walworth School

Walworth School, Bluebell Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 7LP
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Walworth School is a maintained residential special school. It provides primary education and residential care for children up to the age of 11 years. The children have social, emotional and/or mental health needs. Many of the children have additional needs including autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A maximum of 10 children can stay at the school each night. Children usually stay at the school two nights per week. The maximum number of pupils on roll at Walworth School is 90.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 February 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 20 November 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive an excellent level of individualised care in the residential provision. They know members of staff very well and trust them. Members of staff work hard to make the experience of staying in the residence enjoyable. This means that children enjoy their stay and respond very well to the care they receive, which helps them to make good progress.

Children make noticeable progress with their education. They respond very well to the routines in the residence, including at bedtimes. They are well rested and ready for the school day when they arrive at their lessons. Members of staff help children with homework and reinforce learning they have done in the classroom. As a result, children's self-esteem and confidence improve. This enhances their ability to learn, and their progress is sustained.

Children make remarkable progress with their emotional health and well-being. The school has gained the Wellbeing Award for Schools since the last inspection. The approach to the emotional health and well-being of children is embedded throughout the school. Children become used to talking about their feelings. They practise using strategies they have learned, to regulate their emotions. This is significant progress for some children.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. Some projects are innovative, such as the John Muir Award for conservation and the Garden Project. Children work towards external recognition for these activities. The wider school also benefits from these initiatives. Children gain valuable knowledge about and skills in relation to the environment in which they live. They learn to work together as a team. Their sense of self-worth is enhanced by the successes they achieve.

Children develop their social skills because of staying in the residence. Family members consistently reported that this is one of the most important outcomes for their children. Children also said that this is the aspect of staying in the residence that they like the most. They learn essential skills about negotiation and compromise. This helps them to sustain friendships. As a result, children are far less isolated than before they began to stay in the school.

Members of staff help children to move on to their secondary education. Members of staff support visits to new schools. They also encourage children to be increasingly independent during their residential stays. The activities of the older children are tailored to their interests. Members of staff support children's social relationships if necessary. As a result of this input, children move on to their next stage of education with increased confidence.

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

Children are effectively safeguarded in this school. They trust members of staff to protect them. Children work with members of staff on how to be safe. Topics include stranger danger, online safety and bullying. As a result, there are very few incidents of children being at risk when they stay in the residence. This includes when they go out into the community.

Risk assessments are specific, individualised and reviewed regularly. Risk assessments link to residential care plans. This means that children receive the level of care they need if their risks change. The area for development from the last inspection is met. A chronology of incidents is kept. This allows members of staff to recognise and respond to emerging patterns of behaviour. Detailed actions for staff are included in all assessments and plans.

Members of staff undertake useful training on safeguarding practice. Since the last inspection, the staff team has had training on county lines behaviour and the 'Prevent' duty programme. Members of staff know that the children are particularly vulnerable, due to their additional needs. Members of staff are better able to help and protect children because of this training.

Members of staff manage children's behaviour well. They are consistent with boundaries and only use sanctions when necessary. All sanctions are proportionate and restorative. Members of staff rarely use physical restraint in the residence. The head of care reviews all such interventions to ensure that the measures are appropriate, proportionate and that the child was effectively safeguarded. Children receive a powerful message that their behaviour can be managed without physical intervention or oppressive discipline. For some children, this is very different from their previous experiences.

On one occasion, an allegation was made against a member of staff by a child. There was insufficient recording about the action that was taken to ensure that the child was safe and well. The inspector was satisfied that leaders acted appropriately and in the best interests of child. This is an issue about recording, not about unsafe practice. Leaders understand the inspector's concern. They are committed to improving case recording in this respect.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

School leaders view the residential provision as an invaluable resource. They know that the whole school benefits from its successes. The referral information for individual children is clearly linked to the care that residential staff can provide. The residential provision provides very positive experiences for the children who attend. This is confirmed by staff in the school and by the families of the children.

The head of care effectively drives forward the opportunities for the children. Her plans for the residence are creative and successful. She ensures that new initiatives are well planned, so that children enjoy them and flourish as a result. The head of care leads by example and encourages members of staff to develop their own ideas. She is very invested in the staff team and in the children. Members of staff respect her and provide consistent, outstanding care to children as a result of her leadership.

Leaders have an excellent understanding of the progress that children make. They know children's starting points and the targets they work towards. Leaders use this knowledge to ensure that care plans are individualised and purposeful. Any required changes are made swiftly. This means that children make increasing progress in all areas of their development.

Members of staff undertake good quality, relevant training and are appropriately qualified. Supervision and appraisal of practice focus on the needs and progress of the children. Members of staff understand the expectations of them and perform very well. As a result, children receive exceptional care from members of staff who are committed, skilled and knowledgeable.

Leaders help children to embrace equality and diversity. Initiatives such as The Rainbow Flag are innovative and inclusive. Members of staff, children and their families learn about the impact of discrimination. Different types of families are celebrated. The evaluation of this work shows how well the programme has been received. From a young age, children learn to accept and value difference. This also enhances their own sense of self-worth.

Leaders develop strong links with members of the professional network. The head of care talks to health professionals about practice issues. This strengthens processes in the residence. The staff team spends time with therapists to understand the work they do with children. Residential staff extend this specialist input when children have their overnight stays. Children's development is enhanced because of the extra support they receive.

The school is very well supported by the governing body. The chair of governors has an excellent understanding of safeguarding matters. He visits the residence regularly and always sees the children. External monitoring visits take place in line with the national minimum standards. Leaders value the insight and recommendations that

come from these visits. As a result, practice within the residence continues to develop, and children's progress is sustained.

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

Recommendations

- The procedures for dealing with allegations need to be applied with common sense and judgement. Many cases may well either not meet the criteria set out above, or may do so without warranting consideration of either a police investigation or enquiries by local authority children's social care services. In these cases, local arrangements should be followed to resolve cases without delay. ('Keeping children safe in education, 2019', page 53, paragraph 198)

In particular, a full account of any incident should be recorded in the child's file and relevant information passed to the child's family as appropriate.

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: SC040510

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Peter Wallbanks

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Jane Titley: social care inspector

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