

Walton Hall

Walton Hall Special School, Walton, Eccleshall, Stafford ST21 6JR

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Walton Hall Academy is a residential special school for secondary-aged and post-16 children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including aspects of autism spectrum disorder, emotional and behavioural difficulties and other complex needs. The school is in a rural part of Staffordshire. Residential accommodation is provided in two buildings sited within the school's grounds and provides accommodation for boys and girls.

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2019.

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 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: 5 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children accessing this residential provision continue to make significant and measurable progress. Staff work closely with education staff and healthcare staff to provide bespoke care and support that meets children's complex needs. These partnership arrangements mean that children blossom in this environment.

Relationships between children and staff are exceptionally positive. Staff focus on getting to know children and understanding their complex health and medical needs. They continually encourage children to use their language preferences, including sign languages, symbols and gestures to express their wishes and views. Children develop meaningful friendships with their peers and these enhance their life experiences.

Staff work closely with children's parents and carers. These excellent relationships mean that children benefit from seamless care and support. One parent said, 'The staff know [name of child] nearly as well as I do. When he stays he does the things that I could never do with him and I can't thank the staff enough for that.'

The quality of care children receive is exceptional. Staff are highly skilled and continue to develop their skills to ensure that children experience a wide range of meaningful and diverse activities. This means that the residential provision is a stimulating and exciting environment for children. This supports them to develop the social, emotional and cognitive skills that will help them to move towards adulthood. Staff continually celebrate children's successes and achievements and children grow in confidence because of this.

Children are fully involved in decisions about how they spend their time during their stays and who they spend their time with. Staff ensure that children's complex needs are not a barrier that prevents them from accessing community resources and activities. This can-do attitude is embedded in the ethos of this residential provision and means that children thrive in this setting.

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

Children are safe and protected from harm. Staff are extremely competent in assessing children's risks and focus their risk management strategies on reassuring children and reducing their anxieties. They use clear verbal and non-verbal communication to de-escalate and defuse potentially harmful situations. Consequently, there have been no incidents of restraint in the residential provision since the last inspection.

For some children, their complex health needs potentially place them at risk of harm. In these circumstances, residential staff work closely with nursing staff to ensure that

they fully understand children's medical conditions. Since the last inspection, senior managers have renegotiated service agreements with the health provider. This means that children's health plans include their time in residency. This further strengthens the arrangements in place to continually promote children's well-being.

In addition to comprehensive safeguarding training, staff have opportunities to develop their awareness and understanding of how children's attachments impact on their safety and well-being. They are fully aware of their responsibilities and confidently refer any concerns for children's welfare and safety to the relevant agencies. Senior managers vigorously scrutinise safeguarding practice across the school. This helps to keep children safe and protect them from harm.

All residential and school staff are subject to robust recruitment processes. Recruitment records include verified employment references and a range of suitability checks. This ensures that staff are safe to work with children.

The dedicated maintenance team members embrace their responsibilities for keeping children safe. They quickly address any known hazards or risks to children's physical welfare and safety. This team ensures that the premises and grounds are maintained to a high standard, with good risk awareness and risk management. This means that the residential accommodation is free from hazards.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The residential provision benefits from strong and effective leadership. The head of care and the deputy head of care focus their actions on meeting children's individual needs, supporting their progress and providing them with an enjoyable residential experience. Residential staff continually demonstrate their commitment and have high aspirations for every child in their care.

The frequent monitoring and evaluation of the residential provision by senior leaders, managers and independent visitors means that the service meets children's needs. Managers continue to update the care planning process so that children's care plans capture their progress. However, not all staff complete these plans in detail. This means that for some children information regarding their achievements is not contained within this central record.

Since the last inspection, the head of care has reviewed internal policies and procedures. These take account of children's needs and provide children's families with essential information. Nevertheless, procedures relating to specific arrangements for when children are unwell in residency still need further clarification. This will ensure that parents are fully aware of their responsibilities and that other children's time in residency is not disrupted.

Managers ensure that staff have the skills and experience that they need to support children. They seek to offer new training opportunities and use research to enable them to reflect on and review their practice. Nevertheless, some mandatory training

courses for more established and experienced staff are not up to date. The head of care is aware of this but has yet to arrange for refresher training to take place. This does not impact on the quality of care for children. Staff receive reflective supervision. These sessions provide them with the opportunity to reflect on their relationships with children and their own personal development.

Managers and staff work in partnership with parents and external professionals. This means that children receive well-organised packages of care and education. Parents are exceptionally positive about the care that their children receive. They say that the residential provision provides huge benefits for their children.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that children's case files provide a comprehensive and inclusive description of their individual needs, their developmental aims and goals and their progress.
- Ensure that policies and procedures for the care of children who are unwell when accessing this residential service are easily accessible and sufficiently detailed to provide families with necessary information.
- Ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting, and that training is regularly refreshed and kept up to date.

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: SC038723

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Amanda Cameron

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01785 850420

Email address: acameron@waltonhall.shaw-education.org.uk

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020