

Potterspurvy Lodge School

Potterspurvy Lodge, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7LL

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Potterspurvy Lodge School is an independent residential special school for up to 65 children and young people aged from eight to 19 years. The school offers termly and weekly boarding, as well as day provision.

The school caters for children and young people with autism spectrum disorders, complex needs and challenging behaviour.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 February 2020

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 6 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff work hard to create shared interests with children and ensure that children take part in a wide variety of constructive and fun activities. This helps children's social and emotional development.

Generally, children are well supported to engage in education. Some children are working towards qualifications. Others are building their attendance and participation levels. Each child has individual learning targets. Residential staff use key-worker sessions effectively to discuss children's education objectives. This supports children to achieve.

Children who have previously experienced a significant number of changes in their living arrangements are forming secure and stable relationships with staff. This helps children to feel safe and secure. Trusting, consistent relationships help children to stabilise their behaviours. For example, a child who arrived with a history of running away has not done so since being at this school.

Children are able to share their views about their care experience. An independent visitor and an advocate speak to children regularly. Children understand the advocate's role and have a good relationship with her. They often use her to support them in sharing any concerns. Advocates are good at sharing children's views with managers and updating children about management responses.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children's complaints are taken seriously by managers and responded to quickly. In addition, staff ensure that children are supported when making complaints about other agencies. They advocate effectively in the best interests of children.

Safeguarding concerns are also taken seriously. The school carefully follows appropriate safeguarding processes, liaising with the designated officer to ensure that any allegations or disclosures are properly investigated. Leaders and managers have recently strengthened the way that they manage concerns about staff performance.

Staff know how to whistleblow and understand the importance of this. A staff member shared an example of when they had to do this. They were happy with the action taken, because leaders had taken the concerns seriously and acted appropriately.

Staff have received recent training on safeguarding matters. This training included topics such as county lines and mental health awareness. In addition, a designated safeguarding lead presents a weekly safeguarding briefing to all staff. Leaders are

raising staff awareness of contextualised safeguarding. This includes alerting staff to issues relating to hate crime.

Physical interventions have significantly reduced in the residential provision. Staff use a variety of diversionary techniques to avoid the need for physical interventions.

Leaders and managers recognise the need for improvement in behaviour management, particularly at bedtimes. Some children are settling to bed very late at night because bedtime routines are not well established. This is likely to affect their progress at school.

Staff are not as clear as they should be about how to promote children's online safety. Some online risks are not fully understood. Children are accessing gaming devices and mobile phone devices unsupervised. Risk assessments do not specifically reflect children's previously identified online risks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management team has been transformed since the last inspection. Staff are positive about the changes. One said, 'Last year we were being managed, this year we are being led.' The new principal has been keen to draw together the education, care and therapy teams within the service. Twice-daily briefing sessions are now attended by a cross section of staff. These sessions have promoted closer working relationships and improved communication across the school.

There has been a strengthened approach from leaders and managers in relation to performance management. For example, leaders and managers are reviewing night care arrangements to ensure that children receive consistently high-quality care.

Stakeholder feedback is largely positive about the overall progress that children are making in the care provision. Parents and professionals talk about the significant impact that the residential stays have on children. Communication with parents is generally positive. However, staff would benefit from training on how to maintain positive communication with parents and professionals when difficulties arise.

Staffing arrangements are more stable. Staff said morale has significantly improved as a result. Consistency of care is further improved because there is now very minimal use of agency staff.

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

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school. (NMS 11.1)
- Ensure that there is a sufficient number of competent staff deployed appropriately, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, to fulfil the school's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the school. (NMS 15.1)

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: SC012962

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jennifer Nimmo

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector(s)

Sonia Hay, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Bev Allison, Social Care Inspector

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