

# Shenstone Lodge School

Shenstone Lodge School, Birmingham Road, Shenstone Wood End, Lichfield,  
Staffordshire WS14 0LB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this residential special school**

Shenstone Lodge School is a split-site, maintained residential special school catering for children who experience severe social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.

Across the sites there are 93 pupils on roll. The residential provision is situated on the Shenstone Lodge site, which offers education for pupils aged 6 to 13. Currently, there are 52 pupils on the site, of which 5 are residential pupils. The accommodation can house up to 12 children each night Monday to Thursday. The head of care is suitably qualified.

### **Inspection dates: 11 to 13 February 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 **outstanding**

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:** 12 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children are exceptionally happy during their residential stays and form warm and trusting relationships with dedicated staff. Child-focused staff help children with complex needs to develop their confidence, their social skills and their ability to manage their own behaviour. This enables children to increasingly engage with each other and to benefit from a fantastic range of activities and social opportunities. Staff are exceptionally nurturing. They provide children with clear routines and boundaries. Staff know each child's history, care needs and targets well, and use this knowledge to tailor the support that they offer. Children go to staff for hugs, have fun with them and can talk to staff when they are worried or anxious. The colourful, personalised residential provision is welcoming and comfortable and provides a calm and reassuring environment where children can relax. This helps children to make a positive start to their school days.

Children flourish and make progress beyond expectations. Their confidence significantly improves as does their ability to communicate and to make friends. Staff encourage them to make friends outside the residential provision and to play with other children in the local parks. This enhances children's social skills and improves their self-esteem. The progress that children make is transferred to school where conflict reduces and their concentration improves. Children excel in cooking at school because of the skills that they learn in the residential provision. Children's behaviour also improves at home. Consequently, parents feel more confident to take children out into the community. One parent said that the residential provision had definitely helped her child to become confident, 'She is socialising now and making friends. I'm really surprised how quickly she is improving. I wasn't expecting this for her. They [staff] are fantastic.'

Children work with staff towards agreed individual targets and are very proud of their achievements. They earn rewards for a wide range of behaviours, including being nice to each other. Children all benefit from the strong message that staff give which is to value diversity and each other. Children begin to learn how to recognise and manage their own emotions and behaviour. They become better at calming themselves down and use methods like taking themselves to a familiar, quiet place until they feel able to rejoin their peers.

Staff identify and develop children's individual interests, like music. One young person has become confident and independent enough to go on a week-long sailing trip, which was an amazing experience for him. Staff carefully and skilfully plan activities that are suitable to each child's social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities. This enables children to participate and achieve.

Communication and choice are central to how staff engage children and enable them to express their views, wishes and feelings. Children chair children's meetings and

write the minutes. Children also use the Speak Up system to raise any issues. They enthusiastically engage in the Change Makers group, where they say what they want to change and are supported by the head of care and staff to explore the possibilities.

Staff listen to children and explain when their wishes cannot be met and why, and they make changes when they can. Perceptive and sensitive staff engage children in discussions about difficult and challenging personal subjects. This helps them to better understand their own and each other's feelings. Children's physical and mental health needs are identified and extremely well met. Staff encourage healthy diets and exercise and have a highly skilled therapeutic approach to care.

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

Safeguarding practice is excellent. Highly trained staff have sound knowledge of safeguarding issues and a clear commitment to maintain best practice. They engage in the school's Behaviour Watch system, which ensures that safeguarding practice remains child-focused and proactive. Staff are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Children are very safe in the residential provision and say that they feel safe.

Close collaboration and ongoing dialogue with families, school staff and health professionals ensure that staff are fully apprised of any issues arising in children's lives and respond appropriately to them. Managers and staff review all information about children to identify patterns or trends that might indicate that children are at risk. This effective multi-agency approach to safeguarding prioritises prevention and ensures that all children are protected.

Behaviour management strategies are highly effective. Staff know children extremely well and are constantly vigilant for signs of anxiety and distress that could lead to incidents. Sanctions are not used in the residential provision. Interactions with children are based on rewarding good behaviour and understanding and supporting heightened or challenging behaviour. Children's warm and trusting relationships with staff clearly enable them to feel safe and secure. Staff help children learn to manage their own behaviour and understand their own emotional and mental health needs.

Individualised risk assessments and behaviour support plans are detailed, regularly reviewed and provide staff with clear and valuable guidance. Effective team work means that staff inform each other of different approaches that work to safeguard individual children. Staff manage peer relationships and the environment to reduce anxiety for children. Physical intervention is seldom used and only as a last resort. Children are appropriately debriefed afterwards, and staff use incidents to learn, reflect and develop their practice. Children talk openly about their behaviour towards one another and communicate any concerns to staff with confidence. This openness provides children with additional protection from bullying.

Staff are vigilant both on- and off-site and good staffing levels enable highly vulnerable children to explore new activities and experiences in the community. Children do not go missing and are not subject to child exploitation or radicalisation. Staff recruitment is safe and there are no errors in the storage and administration of medication. The head of care immediately responded to a maintenance issue which was identified during the inspection, ensuring that it was repaired and safe before the inspection concluded.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The leadership team is totally child-focused and passionate about the service that they and their staff provide to children. The leadership team is progressive and reflective and ensures that the service is constantly developing and responding to children's changing needs.

The head of care has not just ensured that all of the national minimum standards are met but that the service far exceeds them. Her positive response to the shortfall identified at the last inspection has resulted in a more robust medication system.

Experienced, dedicated staff provide excellent care to children. They are creative, reflective and thinking all the time about ways to improve children's experiences and the progress that they make. Staff speak very highly of the head of care, who provides exceptional leadership and management. They benefit hugely from regular supervision and team meetings where they value her reflective, analytical approach and her strong support for them on a personal level.

Since the last inspection, the residential provision has experienced some challenges. The number of children who are able to access the service has reduced and some staff have left. Despite these issues, staff have continued to place the experience and progress of children at the heart of their practice and have successfully limited any negative impact that these changes may have had.

Governors work with the head of care effectively to monitor and support the residential provision. Governors regularly visit the school and report their findings to the head of care. Governors strongly support the head of care and the executive headteacher to address any challenges and uncertainties. Managerial monitoring and review are ongoing, in-depth and thorough. The head of care actively seeks feedback, ideas and challenge from families, children, other professionals and the governors. She shows an exceptional level of attention to detail and understanding of the impact that all aspects of the service have on the experiences and progress of children. She undertakes learning walks with others, from school staff to the governors, to identify areas for improvement. If she considers that children are not receiving all the services or support that they need to thrive, she challenges the local authority on their behalf.

The head of care promotes research-based practice throughout her team. Since the last inspection, she has become the mental health lead and has delivered training to education staff in attachment. This has deepened their understanding of children's

behaviours and more closely links their practice to that of the residential staff. This enhances children's experiences during their residential stays as they benefit from a consistent approach and understanding in both school and the residential provision. The head of care monitors progress on the government's emerging work on residential care. She has designed a new tool to further evidence the positive impact that the residential provision has on children's development and their ability to engage in education.



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

### **Recommendations**

- That all staff and children are reminded to report any damage they do/find in the residential provision to the head of care immediately.

### **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:** SC038726

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Neil Toplass

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector**

Louise Whittle, social care inspector



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