

Langham Oaks

School Road, Langham, Colchester, Essex CO4 5PA

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Langham Oaks is a residential special school with academy status. Up to 28 pupils board for between one and four nights per week. The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. The last welfare inspection took place in February 2019.

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 March 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: 11 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Strong relationships provide a good foundation for the children to develop their confidence and feel safe. Although some elements of safeguarding practice need improvement, the children enjoy their time in the residential provision. They make progress and experience new opportunities.

The staff have a good knowledge of the children. The children feel that the staff value them and care about them. The children described the residential provision as a home from home.

The children make progress socially, emotionally, educationally, and in their independence skills because of the support that they receive. For example, the children have developed cooking skills, made friends and improved their reading skills.

The children spoke with great enthusiasm about the range of activities that they participate in. They develop new interests and experience new things, such as a residential trip to Wales.

The children enjoy the good-quality food. They were consistently positive about the food provided. Healthy and vegetarian options are available. Breakfasts are open to all pupils to ensure that all children can eat before school.

The children have formal and informal opportunities to contribute their views. They said that the staff take their views seriously. They are confident that if they have a concern, staff will act to support them. This confidence contributes to the children's sense of safety.

Managers have improved the handling of medication. Safer procedures have lessened the risk of medication coming into school without staff's knowledge.

The current accommodation is sparse and tired. In addition, the dining room was very cold in the evening. Although the children said that they are happy with the accommodation, these factors compromise the homeliness of the environment. A new school with residential accommodation is being built on the school site, and the pupils will move into the new building. However, in the interim period, the shortfalls need to be addressed to ensure that the environment is suitable.

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

Managers have not ensured that safeguarding records are thorough. The records were difficult to locate and were not consistently good enough. Some records lacked dates and signatures. In one instance, although contact was made with the

designated officer and information was shared, records were not made of what discussion took place and what advice was given. In a further instance, insufficient action was taken to address a concern about the conduct of a member of staff. Failure to respond proactively and record clearly means that children are not safeguarded as far as is reasonably practical.

The children feel safe and they trust the staff. They said that the staff know them well enough to spot if they are struggling emotionally. The children said that they would not need to ask for help; the staff would recognise their distress and respond.

Simple risk assessments cover the known and predictable risks and consider the sleeping arrangements. Staff are aware of the risks to children and how they are to be managed.

The children said that bullying is not an issue. They said that they could share concerns with staff if such incidents arise, and have faith that staff will act. The staff are alert to the potential of incidents and know how to respond and raise safeguarding concerns.

The children said that the staff model kind and supportive behaviour. One child said, 'You have respect for each other. Mutual respect. You can trust the staff. You learn to trust other people. Everyone helps everyone out. If you see someone in distress you help them out. They help you out.' The staff have consistent expectations, know the children well and respond before incidents escalate. Consequently, physical interventions are very rarely used in the residential provision.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A well-respected, experienced manager leads the residential provision. He is valued by the staff and managers and the children. He is reflective and realistic about the quality of care.

Despite significant staffing pressures, managers have ensured that children continue to make progress and enjoy the residential experience.

Since the last inspection, the managers and designated safeguarding staff have received regular supervisory support. This includes formal line management supervision and external supervision focusing on staff well-being. This is a significant improvement.

The staff and manager have a good understanding of the plans for the children and they share the plans with the children's families.

The managers ensure that children's admissions to the residential provision are carefully managed. A social worker spoke about how the managers enable children to board at a flexible pace that is suitable to the individual child. As a result, a child who

was reluctant to board is now embracing the experience, enabling him to continue to live at home.

There have been no complaints about the residential provision. The manager has met the previously unmet national minimum standard and addressed the four recommendations that were made at the last inspection.

Independent external scrutiny has not been as strong or effective as necessary. One independent visit to the school has been missed. The last two visits did not result in any feedback from children and the subsequent reports have not been routinely shared with the management committee. This limits the effectiveness of the process and compromises senior managers' oversight of the residential provision.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 20.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the head teacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. Monitoring reports should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the residential accommodation is maintained to a suitable standard and that the dining room is sufficiently heated.
- Ensure that all required independent visits take place and include consultation with the children, and that their views are included in the subsequent report.

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: 1213822

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Simon Dawson

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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