

Orchard Manor School

Orchard Manor School, John Nash Drive, DAWLISH, Devon EX7 9SF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Orchard Manor School is a local authority provision. It provides education for 176 children, aged three to 19 years, and weekly residential care for up to 35 children. It specialises in providing education and care to children with communication and interaction difficulties, autism spectrum conditions and learning needs.

At the time of this inspection 18 children were residing at the school and occupying one of four residential houses located in the grounds.

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2019.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 January 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 4 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

A significant number of children, staff and parents have raised concerns direct to the school, to Ofsted and via inspection surveys about a range of shortfalls that have had an impact on the experience, progress and well-being of children.

For example, children do not always feel that they have a voice or are central to decision-making. A recent decision, by the senior management team, to make changes to the senior leaders in three of the four residential houses, has left some children, staff and parents feeling that they were not properly consulted, and that their views about the impact this decision would have on children were not fully considered. Some children are feeling upset and angry that important and secure relationships have been disrupted.

Children's records and plans have improved since the last inspection. However, some important information is omitted, including details about ethnicity, gender identity, health, and religious and cultural needs.

In other respects, children and young people enjoy their residential experience. Many have attended for several years, and being part of the residential community has helped them through many significant changes, including the merger of two former schools.

Children say they enjoy the social aspects of being a residential student, the wide range of activities and outings, and the nutritious meals.

The four residential houses are attractive, comfortable and homely. Children have a strong sense of belonging and enjoy excellent relationships with the residential support staff. The school grounds provide good opportunities for leisure activities, with facilities that include outdoor play equipment, a horticultural area and a swimming pool.

Medication is safely managed and administered.

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

Correct child protection procedures are not always followed. Following a serious incident that occurred within the inspection year, leaders and managers commenced an investigation into what had happened prior to making a referral to the local authority. In this instance it did not have a negative impact on the safety and well-being of the children involved, but it had the potential to do so. The incident that occurred also exposed a failure to supervise vulnerable children appropriately. Since

then lessons have been learned and appropriate measures have been taken to reduce the likelihood of children not being supervised appropriately.

An aspect of the physical environment compromises the safety of children and staff. There is an area in the school grounds where broken and unwanted items are kept, including a rusty motorbike, a cement mixer, roof tiles, concrete slabs and metal bars. Children can and do access this area. While it is fenced, the area is easily accessible, and these items should be safely disposed of.

Senior staff respond to complaints promptly. However, records are of an inconsistent quality. They do not always contain a full chronology, with supporting evidence of action taken and outcomes. This lack of detail and clarity does not clearly evidence that correct procedures are followed consistently.

There have been a small number of incidents where children have gone missing. In most cases staff have taken prompt action, although there was one incident when four children were missing in the grounds for up to an hour before their absence was noted. Missing records are handwritten, and they are not always legible and do not always provide a clear and detailed account of what happened, what was done to recover children safely and what follow-up action was taken.

Physical restraints are recorded as being used appropriately. Records include evidence of debriefs with children and staff. One physical restraint resulted in a child sustaining a minor head injury. The child refused medical attention and there is no evidence that medical advice was sought, which is good practice in such circumstances.

Weekly fire safety checks are not consistently carried out in each house. Following a shortfall identified in the last inspection, children have personal emergency evacuation plans.

Staff receive good safeguarding training and there is an extensive safeguarding team in place.

The use of CCTV has been reviewed since the last inspection and it is no longer used in the residential houses.

Staff recruitment is safe. Files have been reviewed and updated and processes are rigorous, thereby reducing the risk that unsuitable adults are appointed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

A lack of effective consultation with children, staff and parents about changes to senior leaders in three of the four residential houses has led to several complaints. Some children, staff and parents have felt disempowered and that their opinions are

not sought or valued. The senior management team has failed to harness consistent support for the change and as a consequence has not succeeded in minimising the impact on children.

Many records require improvement. The effectiveness of oversight of records also requires improvement. Acronyms used in records are not always explained. Some that are handwritten are barely legible. Many are not signed or dated. Physical restraint records do not include clear evidence of management oversight, including who has reviewed the incident or what impact there has been because of the review. Some management reviews are recorded elsewhere, but this means that records do not contain a complete or coherent narrative.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all children receive an independent interview when they have been missing. This means that opportunities are not taken to learn lessons and appropriate action is not taken to reduce the likelihood of further missing incidents.

Many of the residential staff have worked with the children for many years and know them well. There is a full staffing complement, and although there are some shortfalls due to sickness, there is minimal use of agency staff in the residential houses. Staff feel well supported through regular supervision, team meetings and ongoing training. Good use is made of daily handovers to discuss children's needs and practice issues. All staff have a level 3 qualification, and there are good opportunities for senior staff to complete a level 5 qualification.

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:

- 3.12 Where necessary, a child has a clear individual health and welfare plan or similar record, containing relevant health and welfare information provided by parents/carers and recording significant health and welfare needs and issues. This record should be agreed by parents/carers and include: records of developmental checks; health monitoring required by staff; intimate care or bodily functions requiring staff help; and the involvement of a child's parents/carers or significant others in health and welfare issues.
- 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.
- 13.5 The school's leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

Recommendations

- Ensure that weekly fire checks are carried out in each house.
- Ensure that children who have been missing always receive an independent interview and that such information is used to take appropriate action to reduce the likelihood of further missing incidents.
- Ensure that all children's records and plans contain full details of all their needs, including ethnicity, gender identity, and cultural and religious needs.

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: SC003895

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mark Rose

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Inspectors

Norma Welsby, social care inspector (lead)

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