

The Grange Therapeutic School

15–17 Somerby Road, Knossington, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8LY

Assurance visit

Information about this residential special school

The school is an independent residential special school for 14 residential children aged eight to 18 years. Twelve children currently reside at the school during the week, term-time only. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses, one of which is located on the school site. The second house is located in the village of Knossington, a short walk from the main school building. The school is situated in a rural location close to the town of Oakham in Leicestershire. The school caters for students who have social, emotional and mental health needs, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorders and mild learning difficulties.

Visit dates: 6 to 7 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 12 November 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

The school has sensitively managed through a challenging time, putting the well-being of children at the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic. A social worker said: 'Communication with family throughout this time was fluid, offering food vouchers, a computer and so on to lessen the negative and stressful impact of COVID-19.'

Children who have joined the residential provision during this period, and their parents or carers, have been very well supported with their transition. A carer said: 'It was a very difficult time, that was managed very well by the staff. The staff were very welcoming.'

Children benefit from positive relationships with staff, as well as clear boundaries and routines. This enables them to confidently take steps towards independence. Staff are child-centred and flexible in their support of children's individual needs and plans. This helps children to settle quickly, promoting their health and well-being.

Children enjoy being at the school. One child reported that he was 'really excited' about moving from one of the homes to the upper school residential provision. When asked if he had any worries, he replied: 'Not in a million years. I give the home 10 out of 10.'

Children's needs are well understood. There are examples of children who make exceptionally good progress emotionally and socially.

The safety of children

A holistic safeguarding approach means that children are kept central to practice. Staff understand children in the context of the school, residential care and their family or care arrangements. Positive working-together arrangements with parents and carers maintain children at the centre of what the school does.

There has been a drive for improvement on the reporting and recording of safeguarding concerns. Staff understand the importance of clear reporting procedures and appropriate referral to other agencies when required. Staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training and a suite of sessions on safeguarding matters. In addition, team leaders have attended designated safeguarding lead training.

Safeguarding incidents and concerns are responded to appropriately. Staff know and understand the whistle-blowing procedures and are confident in reporting concerns.

Incident reports are reviewed by managers but do not always reflect management oversight or analysis.

Physical intervention is rarely used in the residential provision. The positive relationships staff forge, and their in-depth understanding of children's needs, contribute to children feeling better equipped to regulate their own behaviour.

Overall, risk assessments reflect current risks, they are implemented well and are regularly reviewed. Following significant incidents, leaders review and amend risk assessments accordingly. However, although there were no concerns about practice, one young person's risk assessment did not reflect his current risks. This risk assessment was reviewed and amended immediately.

Leaders and managers

Leaders and managers promote a strong child-centred ethos and a clear vision. The new experienced and qualified head of care provides excellent leadership and support for staff. She is child-centred and demonstrates a good understanding of the children's individual needs. She is ably supported by the management team in each of the residential homes.

Children have experienced several changes to the staff team and some vacancies remain. Staffing of vacant posts is provided by a small consistent team of staff who usually work in the school. This means that children receive better continuity of care, enabling them to form strong and positive relationships with staff.

Staff have continued to receive a good range of training, although most training has been online because of the pandemic.

When concerns are raised, leaders and managers are quick to respond and resolve any issues raised.

Parents and other professionals are unanimously positive about the school and the impact that it has had on children. A parent said: '[The child] absolutely loves coming to school. During the summer holidays, they were literally on countdown until they could go back. [The child] feels really well understood by all the staff and the way they constantly go above and beyond to help them makes us grateful every day.'

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

Recommendations

- Demonstrate robust oversight of incidents by ensuring that a management evaluation and subsequent action are recorded on incident forms. (linked to NMS 13.8)

Residential special school details

Unique reference number: SC001831

Headteacher: Ollie Sharp

Inspectors

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector

Bev Allison, Social Care Inspector

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