

# 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 located in a rural village near Colchester. The school can accommodate 28 pupils in the residential provision for between one and four nights per week. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

The residential manager has been in post for six years. He has the necessary experience and qualification for the role.

The last welfare inspection took place in March 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

### Inspection dates: 12 to 14 October 2021

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>requires improvement to be good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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:** 2 March 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children who attend the residential provision benefit from doing so. They have good relationships with the staff and enjoy the activities. However, there are several areas in respect of safeguarding that need improvement. Safeguarding shortfalls were identified at the last inspection. Although managers have made some improvements since, further issues have been identified at this inspection.

The staff and children get on well. Staff are calm and clear in their communication with the children. Feedback from children's families is positive.

The staff know the children well. They generally have a good understanding of children's needs and their past experiences. However, this knowledge is compromised by staff who do not fully understand some of the information in the children's risk assessments.

Children benefit from engaging activities provided by the dedicated staff team. Activities are exciting and the children look forward to them. These activities enable children to experience things they have never done before. As a result, they develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem.

Children who attend the residential provision make greater progress in their attainment in mathematics and English than those who only attend in the day. General school attendance is also better for residential children. The staff work closely with families and professionals to support the children to attend school.

The residential areas are well maintained. The individual and communal areas are very clean and very tidy. The school uses closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in some residential areas. However, although a CCTV policy is in place, there is no risk assessment to justify its use.

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

Children feel safe. They have good relationships with the staff and say they can talk to them about any worries and concerns they have. The children said that they trust the staff to help them.

Risk assessments written to guide staff in minimising risk are generic. They lack precision regarding risks to children and do not give clear guidance to staff on how to manage the risks. Consequently, the staff are unclear regarding some elements of these risk assessments. For example, when risk assessments refer to certain behaviours, staff are unaware of what this specifically means. This means that staff may not have all the information that they need to keep children safe.

In one instance, a concern in regard to a member of staff that should have been discussed with the designated officer was not. Although the concern was taken seriously, failure to share this with safeguarding professionals does not provide transparency or allow for external oversight of investigations.

One member of staff appointed as a designated safeguarding lead has not refreshed their mandatory designated safeguarding lead training within the appropriate timescale.

One member of staff's recruitment checks do not include the verification of references, despite this now being required. In addition, another member of staff's employment history record was not specific enough to provide assurance regarding any employment gaps.

There have been very few incidents during residential time. The children are well behaved. Children say that bullying is not an issue at the residential provision. Children have confidence that staff would deal with this if an incident did occur.

There have been no physical interventions. Staff manage behaviour through the good relationships that they have with children. One child said, 'The staff really help you here if you are angry.' When asked what they do, he said, 'They teach you to talk about it, and help you calm down.'

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

The residential manager is due to leave. A new residential manager has been appointed and will be starting in January 2022. Recently, unexpected illness has meant that the staff team has been without two tiers of line management. This has affected the capacity and confidence of the staff team.

An email from a member of day staff at the school regarding a concern included language that minimised the safeguarding concern. Although senior managers dealt with the safeguarding concern appropriately, the failure to relay this concern clearly was not picked up by the managers at the time. Therefore, the member of staff has not been able to learn from this.

Individual care plans are in place for the children. These include a range of targets. However, the plans are not clear on the steps taken to achieve these targets. In one instance, the care plan contained significant out-of-date information. Consequently, the staff lack clear and current guidance.

The residential manager has ensured that staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. However, although the residential manager has met regularly with the headteacher these meetings are not recorded in line with the supervision policy. As a result, discussions, rationales and agreed actions are not captured.

An independent person provides good monitoring reports. This is a significant development. These reports have the potential to support the improvement needed.

## **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 for residential special schools:

- 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. (NMS 11.1)

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that recruitment records evidence that all checks have taken place and that employment histories are precise enough to explore any gaps.
- The registered person should ensure that residential care plans are up to date and clear on how staff can support children to achieve their targets.
- The registered person should ensure that the residential manager benefits from reflective supervision in line with the school's supervision policy.
- The registered person should ensure that any use of CCTV in the residential provision is necessary, proportionate, risk assessed and reviewed.

### **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:** Simon Dawson

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector

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