

Kings Mill School

Victoria Road, Driffield YO25 6UG

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Kings Mill School is a residential special school that is maintained by a local authority. The school is in the heart of the town of Driffield. It provides education for 133 children aged from two to 19 years. All children have complex needs, including those on the autistic spectrum. Many children have multi-sensory needs. All children have education, health and care (EHC) plans.

The school has a residential provision, called the Residence. Currently, 37 children stay one, two or three nights each week in the Residence. Up to 14 children can stay each night. The Residence is open during holidays so that children's short breaks can continue. Recently, older children have been able to stay on a Friday night, to help develop independence skills.

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

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 October 2021

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: 8 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's overall experiences and progress require improvement. This is because leaders do not consistently safeguard children who are at risk of going missing from the Residence.

Individualised care plans identify children's needs and how those needs are to be met. The quality of these plans is variable. Although many contain pertinent information, they are not reviewed regularly. This means that plans do not accurately identify children's current abilities. Plans do not identify how progress is to be measured and they do not align consistently with children's EHC plans. This means that leaders and staff do not know whether children are making progress according to their capabilities.

Children thoroughly enjoy their short breaks in the Residence. They build warm and trusting relationships with staff, who they come to know very well. The quality of these relationships is a key strength of the setting. Staff are skilled at understanding children's individual communication styles. This means that they communicate effectively with children and help them to settle well, including those new to the Residence.

Parents and carers value the provision of the short breaks enormously. They are reassured that their children are happy and are being looked after by skilled staff. Parents who had been anxious about their children staying at the Residence say that they are delighted at how well their children have settled. Many parents are able to spend valuable time with their other children as a result. The value of the short breaks encompasses far more than just the children who attend the Residence.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities during their short breaks. During the national lockdowns, staff were creative about finding enjoyable pastimes for children within the confines of the school building. Children often enjoy activities that they cannot do when they are at home. One parent said that her child is more able to be like a typical teenager in the Residence than anywhere else. Such experiences are enriching for children and help their social and emotional development.

Children's health needs are met. The processes for administering medication are safe and errors do not occur. Staff are very knowledgeable about medical issues, such as epilepsy. Training is provided when necessary. Effective communication with parents, health and school staff means that appropriate treatment or care is provided quickly. This means that children continue to attend their short breaks even when their health needs are complex.

The Residence has expanded its service since the last inspection. A small number of older children stay on a Friday night. They practise independence skills, such as

cooking a variety of meals. They learn to work together, and their social skills are promoted. Children are improving their confidence and developing abilities they can use as they become young adults.

Children learn to make choices and share their views about the Residence. Several children meet regularly with an external professional, who talks to them about their experiences of their short breaks. Children also talk to the independent visitor, who visits each half term. Staff encourage all children to make choices about activities, meals and how they spend their time. Children are learning that they have as much right to influence their world as other children of their age.

The physical surroundings in the Residence are good. It is bright, clean and modern, with new furniture and furnishings. One large room is well equipped for the older children to practise their independence skills. Children use the wider school during their short breaks, including the sports hall, sensory areas and a 'rebound room'. Children benefited greatly during the COVID-19 pandemic by having such a wide variety of facilities available for their use.

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

One child has not been kept consistently safe. The child is known to go missing from the Residence when the opportunity arises. The arrangements in place to check the child's whereabouts are not strong enough. As a result, the child has been able to leave the building several times. Senior staff do not recognise this as a serious concern, classing such incidents as 'near misses'. This does not emphasise the significance of this issue to staff. As a result, practice has not yet improved.

Risk assessments are not effective. For example, there is no specific risk assessment for the child who goes missing from the Residence. When risk assessments are in place, they are not regularly reviewed. This means that strategies required to protect children are not up to date and proportionate. Staff, including new staff, are not given clear information about what they must do to ensure the safety and well-being of children. This risks children either coming to harm or being prevented from taking a full part in activities.

The Residence has a fire risk assessment and evacuation plans. Representatives of the fire service provide advice about some personal emergency evacuation plans. This is very helpful for children with additional mobility needs. During the inspection, leaders did not have a common, detailed understanding of the evacuation procedure for the first floor of the Residence. In addition, signage does not follow the setting's own policies and is unclear. Staff understand what they must do to keep children safe and practise this through regular fire drills. However, a lack of understanding in the leadership team could cause confusion during an emergency.

All staff are provided with safeguarding training. New staff do this training as part of their induction. Established staff do refresher training at least annually. The head of

care is a safeguarding lead in the school and undertakes the required learning for this role. However, staff have not yet done county lines training. This was a point for improvement at the last inspection and will be raised again following this inspection.

Children's behaviour in the Residence is very good. Staff have the skills and knowledge to manage behaviour that is challenging. This includes the appropriate use of physical intervention. Staff use their excellent relationships with children to pre-empt difficulties. Restraint is rarely used, and children are helped to understand what is expected of them. As a result, the atmosphere in the Residence is very calm, and children are happy in the care of confident, competent staff.

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

Leaders have not met all the shortfalls from the last inspection. The head of care has aspirations to improve several aspects of the Residence, including the quality of children's records. However, the time taken to make the necessary improvements is too long. The head of care prioritises the day-to-day needs of children. While this is commendable, he does not fulfil other management responsibilities. This means that some tasks are left unmet for longer than is acceptable.

Staff have not had appraisals since the head of care has been in post. He plans to instigate these reviews soon. However, staff are not being helped to develop their performance, including taking on new responsibilities. This means that the head of care has an incomplete understanding of the potential for progress within the staff team.

Not all staff are appropriately qualified. The head of care has a plan to address this. In one case, this is a long-standing issue that has never been resolved. Leaders cannot be certain that unqualified staff have the knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

The head of care is a committed leader, who sets a good example to his staff team. Staff feel supported by him. They feel able to approach him with any questions or concerns. During the earlier stages of the pandemic, several staff were anxious about the impact of the COVID-19 virus on the children in the Residence or on their own families. In response, the head of care provided well-being support to staff. As a result, morale is currently high and sickness absence is low. This helps to provide continuity of familiar staff to children.

Staff receive a structured induction when they begin work at the Residence. This includes essential training on safeguarding and behaviour management. Staff receive regular supervision from those experienced to provide it. The range of training provided includes learning about children's particular needs, as well as more general topics. This approach means that staff, including new staff, have the knowledge and support they require to understand and meet the needs of children in their care.

The Residence remained open throughout the pandemic. This has been exceptionally helpful to children who maintain their usual routines. In addition, leaders respond to families' particular circumstances when possible. For example, the head of care enabled one child to come into the Residence for extra nights, due to a family emergency. This ethos provides individualised support to children and families when they need it most.

The Residence is supported by a hard-working governing body. Governors are invested in the residential provision of the school. They recognise the value of the service to children and their families and are happy to support new initiatives, such as the Residence opening on Fridays. Governors take seriously the shortfalls identified during this inspection. They recognise that steps must be taken to make improvements.

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:

- Staff should create individualised risk assessments to safeguard children, including when they are at risk of going missing from the residential setting. Risk assessments should be specific and reviewed to ensure that they remain accurate. Staff must follow risk assessments closely to ensure that all children are kept safe. (National minimum standards 11.1)
- Leaders and managers must consistently fulfil all their responsibilities effectively. (National minimum standards 13.4)
- All existing care staff must have the relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have other qualifications that demonstrate the same competence. New staff should begin working towards this qualification within three months of their position being confirmed. (National minimum standards 19.2)
- All staff should have a formal annual appraisal of their performance. (National minimum standards 19.6)
- Care and placement plans must be reviewed to ensure that they are specific and remain accurate, according to children's individual needs. Plans should be reviewed and updated when changes occur in children's circumstances. To make plans meaningful, they should take into account progress children make and targets they are working towards. (National minimum standards 21.1)

Recommendations

- All staff, including leaders, should be confident about the detail of evacuation plans in the event of fire. In addition, the correct signage should be used, as set out in the school's fire risk assessment. (National minimum standards 7)
- Staff should undertake training on the risk to children from county lines activity. This should be relevant to this group of children. (National minimum standards 19.1) This is a repeat of a point for improvement made at the last inspection.

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

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