

Wolverdene Special School

Wolverdene School, 22 Love Lane, Andover, Hampshire SP10 2AF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Wolverdene is a local authority school in Hampshire catering for primary-age children who are experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school uses the Thrive Approach, which draws on research in neuroscience, attachment, effective learning and child development, and the PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) model to underpin its work.

The school provides mainly day placements. Ten residential placements are available for boys in The Lodge, where they stay for up to four nights a week. It is situated in the school grounds.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 January 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 25 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive in a loving, caring, supportive environment. Spontaneous acts of affection, such as hugs, abound when children seek the reassurance and company of staff. The strong and trusting relationships between staff and children help children to thrive and make significant strides in their lives.

Staff are thoughtful in the way they plan for children moving into their home. They make sure that they understand children's needs and that they will fit in well with the children already staying in the home. Children are nurtured and supported at a pace in line with their ability to cope with change, and this leads to successful moves and an atmosphere of mutual support.

Children are involved in enriching activities which develop their confidence and social skills. These activities are used opportunities to learn and develop in line with the school curriculum. For example, children learning about the Iron Age in school were taken to a nearby Iron Age fort and enjoyed an Iron Age meal. This approach enables the rounded development of each child, whether it be academic, social or emotional.

Children develop their self-care skills at their own pace. Bespoke care plans use identified targets and involve multidisciplinary team planning for each child. Children take part in personalised therapies such as play therapy, Lego-based therapy and 'Key for Life'. These develop their understanding and skills in school, at home and in their local communities. As a result of engaging with these therapies, a child was able to find a way of confiding in staff. He shared concerns that were previously unknown, and action was taken to keep him safe.

Staff help children to build emotional resilience by helping them learn coping skills and strategies to manage their emotions. Staff model good behaviour and promote understanding, patience and acceptance. They actively promote the benefits of living in a multicultural society. For example, one child who previously had preconceived views of other cultures has been challenged and educated sensitively by staff to change these views.

Children live in a well-maintained home. They benefit from staff efforts to redecorate and personalise their bedrooms; consequently, it is a homely and welcoming environment. One governor told inspectors, 'The talent and compassion of the staff at The Lodge is amazing, and the children have real fun and a real childhood.'

Children have several forums in which to voice their opinions. They actively influence activities and menus and are involved in the recruitment of new staff. They have a daily opportunity to reflect and discuss how they are feeling and share and celebrate success together. This has enabled children to develop friendships and create a

strong sense of community spirit within the residential provision. The impact of this inclusive culture is exceptional in terms of helping children feel valued, cared for and part of a family. They grow in confidence and learn to care for themselves and others. A child who was previously shy and withdrawn is now able to communicate and contribute fully.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children live in an enhanced culture of safety and nurture, where staff understand and consider their vulnerabilities. Staff have excellent insight into each child's strengths and weaknesses. Risk assessments and plans are clear on how children are supported, and care plans are implemented meticulously into staff's practice. This gives children the opportunity to feel safe, which then provides a basis for them to grow and develop. Children have become safer and are taught to make safer choices as a result of the care and support from staff.

Close collaborative meetings ensure that concerns are shared with external agencies if necessary. Staff visit families to offer advice, guidance, support and strategies to help them to keep their children safe. This has been invaluable, particularly during challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The model of emotional safety is an exemplar and a strength of this service. Children are able to reflect on behaviours and implement new strategies because staff have helped them to feel safe, secure and cared for. Children have been able to reflect on their past experiences and then implement positive coping mechanisms. Skilful staff intervention has created strong and meaningful relationships. This has enabled children to confide in staff about past events and current worries.

All staff know what to do and who to inform if they have concerns for a child's well-being. All staff have received training. Oversight by governors, underpinned by their availability and scrutiny care practice is of a very high standard. Records of how incidents have been managed are clear and succinct. They give a clear audit trail of how issues have been addressed and resolved. Consequently, children's well-being and safety is promoted to an excellent standard. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

All necessary checks are carried out on staff new to The Lodge. All records are filed, and these are audited to ensure they contain the information needed. Governors, as well as managers, oversee the recruitment of new staff to the provision, and this adds an extra layer of scrutiny to checks. This is another area of improvement since the last inspection.

Incidents of physical intervention are carefully reviewed by the senior leadership team. Children's views are sought and recorded, and behaviour plans are reviewed if required. Children are involved in developing their behaviour support plans and identify strategies when they are unsettled. This helps children to feel invested in

developing their own strategies and helps them to take responsibility for improving their behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are ambitious and inspirational and are instrumental in embedding a reflective culture. The residential staff are role models and held up as an exemplar of good practice across the whole school. This has enabled children to receive consistently excellent care, both in school and in the residential provision.

The therapeutic approach is understood by staff and implemented in practice. This is praised by the clinical psychotherapist and is having a significant impact on children's progress and lives. For example, children's behaviour and engagement in education has improved, incidents have reduced and children have fun. The strength of relationships between staff and children has helped to inform external agency responses to interventions.

Stakeholder feedback, particularly from parents, is glowing. Inspectors received comments such as, 'They know my child perfectly,' 'They are amazing,' and, 'Staff are fantastic at supporting my child and supporting me.' This demonstrates that not only children, but also families, feel valued and cared about.

The provision has high levels of external scrutiny that are child-centred and emphasise the safety and emotional well-being of the children. Very active, committed and interested governance, underpinned by excellent independent reports, help inform internal monitoring and action plans. This ensures that there is no complacency and a strong desire to improve the service.

Staff receive a variety of training, mandatory and additional training in order to develop a good understanding of therapeutic restorative work, which is supported by clinical supervision. All staff report excellent levels of support from managers and strong cohesive teamwork. However, while they receive supervision, the quality of recording these meetings is not always consistent. A lack of detail means that previous actions and discussions are not easily audited.

Cohesive multidisciplinary working ensures that all staff know each child's needs and targets. Regular safeguarding meetings and progress meetings ensure that staff at the residential provision are highly attuned to the needs of the children and can support them. Staff have regular dialogue with teachers and ensure that children's achievements are celebrated at the end of each school day, making children feel valued and important. The culture instilled by manager and leaders is one of reflection and a willingness to learn from feedback from any stakeholder. Comments or criticism are seen as an opportunity to develop the service and learn.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that supervision records detail the discussion between staff and the manager. Currently, these lack detail and are not easily audited.

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: SC012029

Headteacher/teacher in charge: **Nathalie Akhmatova**

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Inspectors

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