

Oakfield

Oakfield, Hopewell Road, Hull HU9 4HD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential special school for girls and boys. Children are between the ages of 11 and 16 years old. They all have an education, health and care plan for special educational needs.

The school is located east of the city of Hull. The school has six houses; three are currently used as residential homes for the children. The housing is located opposite the school on the same site. Children can stay in the residential accommodation during term time for a maximum of four nights per week, Monday to Thursday. The school offers flexible support to families and children. The number of nights that residential pupils stay varies according to their individual needs.

The headteacher has been in post for a number of years. There is a new head of care. She has been in post since January 2021. She is experienced and has worked in the residential service for nine years.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

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: 1 to 3 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 4 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There have been significant changes in the residential staff team since the last inspection. Some staff have left and some have moved into different roles within the school. The children know some staff exceptionally well and are building relationships with newer staff. The children said that they like their stay in residency. One child commented, 'I like everything about being here.'

The children enjoy a variety of activities. These activities give children the opportunity to try new experiences and develop new interests. Residency offers children time to positively socialise with their peers. Activities they enjoy include going to the driving range, playing football and going swimming.

The children's educational achievements improve because they benefit from a coordinated approach to their learning from school and residency. There is a 'walk about' scheme in place. This scheme ensures that staff are always there to help children struggling in the classroom. The residential staff are part of the walk about scheme. The residential staff use their positive relationships with children to help them to focus on learning. Shared targets between the school and the residential service reinforce children's learning across both settings.

Children and families were well supported during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff completed weekly welfare checks on the children and the well-being team offered children and their families support and guidance through emails. This email support was very successful. It provided children with an avenue to share their worries so that the well-being team could identify the right help for them. Parents could reach out for help through phone calls or the use of a bespoke mobile phone app. The introduction of this application helped parents to ask questions and share any issues or concerns. The support offered to children and families helped to bring the school community together during a very isolating time.

Throughout the pandemic, the staff and children created a food bank where they all helped to put parcels together to make sure that families had food. They also supported children and families experiencing crisis. A variety of additional support was provided by the school for families in emergencies. The support included helping families complete essential daily tasks and providing essential household items where needed.

The children's emotional well-being significantly improves because of their time in residency and the support of the school's dedicated well-being team. This team has its own department where children access support around anger management, self-esteem and anxiety, in a child-friendly environment. Children particularly benefit from the well-being department's drop-in service. This is a safe space for children to come and talk about any worries and concerns.

The residential building's decor looks tired in places. For example, some carpets are stained, paint is chipped and some shower curtains look unclean. There is an ongoing cycle of improvement, and some of the issues are waiting to be fixed. Some residential houses need attention. They lack children's displays and pictures, and noticeboards are damaged. In one medication room, the lighting in the evening is not adequate. The headteacher was quick to act during the inspection. She ensured that the issues in the houses were addressed and the lighting in the medication room was immediately replaced.

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

The children's safety is prioritised. The designated safeguarding leads work closely with a variety of services, including the police, social care and other specialist teams, to share information to help keep the children safe. The designated safeguarding leads have a good oversight of the most vulnerable children. These specialist staff are actively involved in the development and delivery of risk assessments for these children. They also monitor action to keep the children safe.

The approach to supporting children and families is well coordinated across the school. The designated safeguarding leads, the welfare team and senior leaders know children and families well. They are quick to identify wider risks to children and to put the support in place that children and families need.

The staff complete training to help them understand how to keep the children safe. Staff know how to report concerns in school. However, a small number of staff do not have a full understanding of whistle-blowing procedures and the potential role of outside agencies within this process. Action was taken during the inspection to make sure that all staff were given a copy of the whistle-blowing policy.

The staff all know the risks for each individual child. The children's risk assessments are updated after any incident to make sure that staff are aware of how to manage risks. When the children go missing from residency, staff follow them and report them as missing from the service in line with their plans. This coordinated approach helps to keep children safe.

The procedures for the recruitment of new staff are effective. All the relevant pre-employment checks are completed before staff start their role to make sure that they are safe to work with the children.

The children learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about road safety, how to stay safe online and the risks of being involved in criminal activity.

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

There is a new head of care. She has been in post since January 2021. She is experienced and has worked in the residential service for nine years as the deputy

head of care. The new deputy head of care has also worked in the service for many years and started this post in April 2021. There has been a lot of recent changes to the staff team. There are several new staff working in the residential service. The members of the team are working together to develop in their new roles. In addition to new leadership and staffing arrangements, the service is undergoing operational changes due to a shift in funding circumstances.

The head of care is dedicated to her role and is keen to develop the service. She understands the strengths of the provision. However, her improvement plans do not demonstrate that she recognises all the priority areas for development. The headteacher has strong oversight of the school and the residential provision. She knows the strengths and the key areas for development. She has a strong plan in place to help residency move through the funding changes successfully. The plan includes supporting leaders to develop as a team and to help them focus their plans. This will ensure the continuation of the service.

The governors have oversight of the service through attending governors' meetings and reviewing reports from the safeguarding team and the head of care. However, they have not visited the residential provision since before the start of the pandemic. This does not help leaders to make continuous improvements to the residential setting.

The independent visitor carries out regular monitoring visits. His reports provide an overview of the service and safeguarding matters. His reports do not provide an assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment. This is a missed opportunity to improve the quality of the service for the children.

The residential managers have monitoring systems in place to track children's progress. These systems have been improved to identify the small steps the children take which make big achievements. These monitoring systems help leaders to develop the end-of-term reports to fully capture children's progress. However, some aspects of the managers' monitoring systems are not yet effective with regard to daily monitoring. As a result, issues in respect of the environment are not always quickly identified and addressed.

The staff said that they are well supported by the head of care and the deputy and they all receive regular supervision. The quality of the recording of staff supervision varies. Some supervisions do not fully demonstrate that staff have reflected on children's experiences and needs.

The leaders are strong advocates for the children. They work closely with a wide range of other services to make sure that the children can access the support that they need. They work with specialist mental health teams, the police, social care and youth offending services. The leaders are quick to challenge professionals where appropriate to make sure that children and families are fully supported.

The leaders make sure that the children's voice is at the centre of their care planning. They support the children to contribute to their progress reviews. Through the residential children's council, leaders listen to the children's wishes and where possible, act on them.

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:

- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.1)
- The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.3)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 13.4)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 20.2)

Recommendations

- The registered person should consider using different ways to refresh and test staff knowledge of procedures such as whistle-blowing, particularly in respect of the role of outside agencies. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 11.1)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision focuses on children's experiences, needs, plans and feedback. Also, that supervision is recorded effectively. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 19.6)

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: SC466264

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Rachel Davies

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector

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