

The Springfields Academy

Springfields School, Curzon Street, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0DS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is set in a small rural town in Wiltshire. The school is an academy and offers day and residential provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorders.

The residential accommodation is provided on the school site in one building. All residential pupils return home at weekends and during school holidays. At the time of the inspection, nine children were accessing the residential provision.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State 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 inspection on 12 April 2021.

The residential provision was last inspected in November 2019.

Inspection dates: 8 and 10 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 11 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their residential experience and make good progress because their health, education, well-being and independence are prioritised and well promoted. One parent was keen to tell the inspector how their child's health had improved significantly because of the sensitive support the child receives to manage his health needs.

Children are relaxed and comfortable in their environment. They say that they enjoy staying in the residential provision because they make new friends and have lots of fun. Children are positive about the adults who care for them, telling the inspector that the adults are kind and fun to spend time with. The adults who support the children have the right skills and experience to build positive and trusting relationships with them.

After-school time is busy and productive. Children are helped to channel their energy positively, making good use of the games and resources available to them. The broad range of activities promotes children's health, well-being and social skills effectively. Parents really like the photos they receive of their children enjoying the activities.

Children's views are actively sought and are used to influence change in the residential provision. For example, because of listening to children, positive changes have been made to the decor of the residential accommodation, the food provided and the activities on offer.

The residential team refers to itself as 'a small family' and speaks about the children like that of a proud parent. The team implements boundaries, structure and routines effectively, which help the children to feel safe and secure in the residential provision. Children get on well together and with the staff.

Feedback received from social workers is positive. These professionals confirmed that children have made significant progress because of the support they receive. They said that the head of care and staff maintain regular communication, and safeguarding concerns are always reported in a timely manner.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that children are kept safe and are protected well in the residential provision. The school's safeguarding procedures are clear and implemented effectively by staff. Leaders and managers maintain helpful professional relationships with safeguarding agencies; they seek advice when required and report concerns appropriately. Safeguarding records are well maintained and provide a clear audit trail of the actions taken to reduce risks and to keep children safe.

Leaders and managers have worked hard to improve practice in relation to the use of restraint. Staff now have a better understanding of children's needs, and positive behaviour is promoted well. Rewards and incentive schemes encourage children to develop strategies to manage their anxieties and frustrations more constructively. Children respond well to this more positive culture. Consequently, the use of restraint and the frequency and severity of incidents both have reduced. However, records of debrief discussions with children and staff after an incident do not always focus well enough on discussions about preventing a reoccurrence of the incident.

The recruitment of new staff is managed centrally by the trust's human resources department. References about new staff's suitability are always obtained, and staff do not start working with children until safer recruitment checks have been completed. However, confirmation of the reference given is not always completed verbally, which could limit the opportunity to explore specific details with the referee should there be concerns.

Complaints are responded to appropriately. Since the last inspection, there has been one formal complaint made. Suitable action was taken in response. Records are detailed and confirm that the complainant is happy with the conclusion.

The residential provision is maintained to a good standard and health and safety checks are completed as required. Children regularly engage in fire evacuation drills and are clear about what actions they need to take in the event of a fire.

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

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. The headteacher and head of care work well together to the benefit of the residential provision. Staff feel well supported by leaders and managers and report that morale is good. Staff are motivated in their work and share the head of care's child-centred approach.

Residential staff are provided with support to help them to care for the children. Training opportunities help staff to understand how to meet the children's needs, while team meetings and supervisions offer additional opportunities to share information and to learn from each other. However, records of these meetings do not reflect the solution-focused discussions that take place.

Oversight of the residential provision can improve. Governors and trustees understand the challenges the school faces and are clear about their role. However, monitoring of some records by leaders, managers and the independent visitor lacks robust scrutiny. For example, the inconsistency in clearly written incident records has not been identified, nor where debrief records and reference verification can improve. Leaders and managers have appointed a new independent visitor to bring more rigour to the monitoring and to drive improvements forward.

Children are looked after by a small team of residential staff. This team works well together and provides children with continuity and consistency of care. Current contingency plans to provide cover for this team are not sustainable. Further consideration is needed to ensure that the right temporary staff are in place.

Staff maintain positive relationships with parents and professionals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, residential staff contacted families regularly to provide them with outreach support, advice and guidance. Families spoke positively about the support they and their children received during these difficult times. One parent wanted the inspector to know that the staff had been 'unfailingly supportive of my child and our family'.

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

Recommendations

- All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (NMS 12.5)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)

Points for improvement

- The registered person should ensure that contingency plans to provide temporary staff cover are suitable to ensure that children's needs are met.
- The registered person should ensure that minutes of team meetings and supervision sessions include sufficient detail to demonstrate the discussions held.

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: SC039093

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Mike Thomas

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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