

Cloughwood Academy

Cloughwood Academy, Stones Manor Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1NU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Cloughwood Academy is a purpose-built day and residential special academy. It is located within extensive grounds on the Mid Cheshire Campus in Hartford. The academy caters for male children between the ages of eight and 18 years. There are currently 87 children on roll. The academy provides extended days and residential places during term time. There are eight residential places with 18 boys accessing the provision Monday to Thursday.

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: 29 to 31 March 2022

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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: 21 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

All children make excellent progress from their individual starting points. They really enjoy their residential stays and have excellent relationships with the staff and their peers. One child said, 'I love it here, I love the staff, there is nothing I would change.'

Children enjoy spending time with their friends, and for some this is the only opportunity they have to see friends outside of school. One child said, 'I like it 'cos it gives me the chance to spend time with my friends. I live a long way away from my friends and I don't get to see them otherwise.'

Children are supported by a consistent and child-centred staff team. Children have developed positive and trusting relationships with staff. Parents told the inspectors that their children are making significant progress because of their residential stays. Examples include developing independence skills, improving social skills, building confidence and emotional resilience. One parent said that her child has learned to shower and dress himself independently. This child has also recently requested to go to the shops on his own from home, and this demonstrates a growth in self-confidence.

Children benefit from a wide range of activities. Activities are a mixture of fun as well as enhancing the children's learning opportunities. Children are involved in choosing their activities. They are encouraged to try new and exciting activities that they would never be able to do at home. One parent said, 'I know he is happy there. He always comes home smiling.'

Staff celebrate children's achievements and give them lots of praise. This helps to boost children's confidence and self-esteem. As a result, children are proud of themselves.

Children are maturing and taking on new responsibilities. Staff have introduced a peer mentoring scheme which gives the older children additional responsibilities to support the younger residents. The peer mentors told the inspectors they are very proud of becoming a mentor.

Staff use creative and fun approaches to engage the children. They use games, art, colouring and quizzes to engage children in informal educational activities, for example COVID-19 time capsules. The children were encouraged to reflect on how the pandemic has made them feel, what they have learned from it and what some of the positive aspects have been.

Transitions into and out of the home are carefully and sensitively planned. Children can try activities and visit for tea before they stay. Transitions are at the child's pace. A child-friendly induction pack contains photographs of all the staff and details about

what the child can expect when they stay overnight. There is lots of information to provide the child with reassurance about their stays.

Children contribute to their records. They are involved in setting targets and the review of their targets. This helps children to understand the progress they are making and the areas that they still need to work on. Targets are shared and reviewed across the school and residential, and this places children at the centre of practice.

Children receive support to stay healthy. Staff promote physical exercise and healthy diets. One child who previously had a very restricted diet has been successfully encouraged to try new and healthier foods. Staff are proactive in ensuring that children can access specialist support services to meet their needs.

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

Children benefit from clear routines and boundaries. These are well understood and accepted by the children. They clearly know what is expected of them. Parents are confident in the staff team's ability to care for their child safely. One parent said, 'He has a really good relationship with staff, he feels safe there and he can talk to staff about anything that is worrying him.'

Each child has a behaviour support plan that contains information about potential triggers, phases of behaviours and support strategies. Children receive help and support to manage their feelings and behaviours. Research-based approaches are supporting children to recognise feelings and self-awareness. One parent said, 'He is a totally different child. He never had any self-belief and staff have really built his confidence. He is now so much more independent and resilient. I am really proud of him.'

Children can better regulate their emotional responses. One child's behaviours have significantly improved, and he no longer displays self-injurious behaviours. There is a strong focus on supporting children to maintain positive mental health and emotional well-being. One parent said, 'He is controlling his emotions better and walking away from situations.'

Children are extremely settled and there are very few incidents where children have displayed challenging behaviours. Consequently, physical interventions are rare and only used as a last resort. Evidence of one-to-one work is strong following incidents and this limits the use of sanctions. Following an incident of negative behaviour in a school vehicle, a child was supported to make a booklet about how to behave safely when travelling. He now uses the booklet as a visual prompt whenever travelling in the school vehicle.

Safeguarding arrangements protect all children and promote their welfare. Staff, including the designated safeguarding lead, know and follow procedures for

responding to concerns. During lockdown, both residential and teaching staff undertook regular welfare calls to parents and children. Parents told the inspectors how invaluable this was.

Recruitment and vetting procedures are effective. The physical environment is safe and secure. Any matters relating to safety and maintenance are promptly addressed by the maintenance team.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children. They lead by example and have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of children. The residential provision is an integral part of the school. It provides a high-quality service that enhances the experiences of all children.

The head of care continues to develop her role and is an active part of the school senior leadership team. She is well supported by the care staff and the headteacher. She leads by example, offering support and guidance to the staff to make sure that the children's needs are consistently met to a high standard.

Parents are unanimous in their feedback about the benefits of residential stays and the significant progression of their children. One parent told the inspectors that she has seen a 'massive difference' in her son in a couple of weeks. The school can clearly demonstrate the positive difference that it has made to the lives of children.

The school's governing body monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the residential provision. The independent person regularly visits the residential provision and meets with the staff and children. His reports ensure that high standards of care practice are maintained and there is continuous improvement.

The head of care makes good use of both her own self-evaluation and external monitoring to ensure that the residential provision continues to build on its strengths. Partnership working is a key strength across the whole school. Parents spoken to confirmed that communication is strong.

Training opportunities for the residential staff are extensive and wide ranging. This enhances staff's knowledge, practice and professional development. A small core group of staff have worked together for several years and demonstrate a clear focus on children.

Leaders and managers have addressed the three recommendations from 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

Social care unique reference number: SC006625

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Adrian Larkin

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Inspectors

Michelle Bacon, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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