

Wilds Lodge School

Stamford Road, Empingham, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Wilds Lodge is an independent residential and day school. Pupils are aged between five and 19 years. Pupils have social and emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The residential provision provides boarding for up to 70 pupils. The boarding accommodation is situated across three sites. Two of these sites are situated a few miles from the main school site. The boarding accommodation is divided into five areas according to the pupils' age and vulnerability.

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

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 October 2022

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: 23 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

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

In the last 18 months, there has been a change of governance as the school has transitioned to a new organisation. During this transitional process, changes have been implemented to address areas of shortfall. These changes are not yet fully embedded. Some of the shortfalls have led to concerns about the safety of children.

At times, children have been vulnerable because some behavioural incidents have not been managed in line with school policy. Examples of this are the inappropriate use of restraint. Children have regularly gained access to the residential setting's roof and managers have struggled to implement an effective plan to reduce this risk. Furthermore, staff, including a member of the safeguarding team, have not followed whistle-blowing procedures. This inaction led to a delay in reporting a safeguarding concern about an inappropriate use of restraint. Leaders have not been professionally curious when investigating safeguarding concerns.

Medication is not always safely managed. The shortfalls identified are as follows:

- The medication audit of a controlled drug was incorrect.
- There is an inconsistent approach to medication disposal.
- The disposal of medication system is open to abuse.
- The learning from a complaint about medication management has not been fully embedded.

The residential provision itself is a warm and welcoming environment for children. Children have been encouraged and supported to personalise their bedrooms; this develops their sense of belonging.

Staff value children's ideas and views. There are regular children's meetings where children can voice their ideas about activities, menus and sharing bedrooms. A 'QR' code has been introduced for reporting complaints. This has made reporting complaints more accessible to children.

Children feel able to talk to staff and managers about any issues they might have, safe in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously.

Children enjoy residing at the school and speak positively about this. They are provided with a vast number of opportunities to engage in activities, try new experiences and make wonderful memories. In turn, these enriched experiences support children to grow in self-esteem and self-confidence and improve their physical health. Parents and carers expressed how much progress their children have made, particularly with their self-confidence.

Children have made good progress in education, considering their respective starting points when moving to the school. Some of the children have previously experienced considerable disruption to their education, including school exclusions, general instability and poor attendance. Now, children are engaging with education and are receiving the support that they need to make academic progress. Children have aspirations for the future and staff are ambitious for them.

Transitions into and out of the residential provision are child-centred. This is a strength of the provision. One parent said, 'My son had a couple of trial days and just wanted to stay, so they changed the plan for this to happen earlier than planned. They are so adaptive.'

There has been an increased level of staff turnover. This has resulted in a less experienced staff team. However, despite changes within the team, staff have worked hard to form warm and nurturing relationships with children. Children said that they love staying in the residential provision and described the staff as 'nice' and 'kind'.

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

Children are generally well behaved in the residential provision. Staff support children to manage their anxieties using a therapeutic approach. They have positive relationships with children. This means that the number of incidents, including incidents involving restraint, are low.

Occasionally, incidents of inappropriate restraint have occurred. Leaders have recognised this as a shortfall and have introduced measures to address restraint practice.

There is a lack of professional curiosity in the management of safeguarding concerns and outcomes. Some incidents have not had clear management oversight. Not all risk factors and information are considered when reviewing incidents and completing investigations of safeguarding concerns.

Documentation relating to safeguarding concerns is unclear about what evidence has been shared between external and internal agencies, and what action has been taken in response. This means that relevant safeguarding agencies may not be aware of all the evidence regarding specific safeguarding concerns, impeding their decision-making.

The process for risk management does not sufficiently consider all risks. The risks relating to children sharing bedrooms is not sufficiently evaluated and it is not always clear how risks may be mitigated to safeguard children. Day pupils can access the residential area and, on occasion, have accessed a child's bedroom. This raises concerns about privacy and managing peer relationships.

Leaders and managers have taken the concerns about children climbing on to the roof seriously. However, the risk assessment relating to children climbing on the roof is not known by all staff, and it is brief. Leaders have met with a police officer to discuss preventative measures, but they have not implemented one of the recommendations the police officer made. They had not asked the fire brigade to talk to the children about the risks relating to climbing on the roof. Contact with the fire brigade was made during the inspection. The risk assessment was updated by leaders to provide more detail during the inspection, and this was disseminated to all relevant staff.

Staff are currently only encouraged to reflect on incidents that involve the physical restraint of a child. This means that staff do not formally reflect on other incidents that they are involved in, and consequently do not have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of what could be done to prevent similar incidents in the future, or how to manage incidents better. The headteacher said that this is something they will be working on.

Staff delayed reporting a safeguarding concern for 12 days. This was in respect of the staff observing a child being inappropriately restrained. Since this time, staff have received further training about the school's whistle-blowing policy. Inappropriate restraint has resulted in bruising to a child. The investigation into how the child sustained the bruising was poorly managed. Leaders have since adopted a new physical intervention model and believe that this will be a safer model for their children and staff. Leaders and managers are actively taking steps to ensure that children receive safe and appropriate care at all times.

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

The residential provision has gone through a turbulent time since the last inspection. Leaders and managers have made significant changes. Recruitment and retention are now improved, although it has been difficult to recruit staff with experience of residential childcare. Another area of concern is the inappropriate use of physical restraint. A new model for restraint practice has been brought in, and this is being embedded into practice.

A safeguarding investigation commissioned by leaders and managers reported on the inappropriate use of restraint. Despite this purposeful attempt to look at restraint practice, there remains a lack of professional curiosity, and even independent reporting leaves some questions unanswered.

School-led investigations into safeguarding concerns have been lacking. Leaders and managers have yet to demonstrate, and embed, a strong safeguarding culture.

Parents and carers are mostly positive about the care their children receive. They spoke about how well the school supports them and their children. They also talked about the many opportunities for their children to have social experiences. However,

some parents are concerned about poor communication and the behaviour of children.

Children are mainly positive about their experiences in the residential provision. They can talk about the progress they make and the friends they have made.

The school promotes a learning environment in which staff are encouraged to gain further qualifications. Staff have access to weekly training opportunities. These help staff to focus on areas where practice needs to improve, as well as gaining a good understanding of the children's needs and the school's therapeutic approach.

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 leadership and management, including governors, trustees and proprietors, demonstrate effective skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and actively promote the safeguarding and welfare of children. Staff with management responsibilities have undertaken appropriate training in the management and practice of residential care. (National minimum standard 2.3)
- The school should ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school, and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (National minimum standard 13.1)
- All medication is safely and securely stored and accurate records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the children to whom they are prescribed. Staff are suitably trained to administer a child's medication as appropriate. Children allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. Where applicable, schools have regard to statutory guidance. (National minimum standard 12.8)

Recommendations

- Ensure clarity of decision-making, and consider completing risk assessments for children sharing bedrooms. (Linked to national minimum standard 9.1)
- Ensure that children who are not residential do not access the bedrooms of residential children. (Linked to national minimum standard 9.7)

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: SC069231

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Kirsty Lamb

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01780767254

Email address: office@wildslodgeschool.co.uk

Inspectors

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

Sarah Orriss, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022