

# Walworth School

Walworth School, Bluebell Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 7LP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained special school for boys and girls. It provides primary education and residential care for children up to the age of 11. The children have social, emotional and/or mental health needs. Many of the children have additional needs, including autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit disorder. There are 77 children on the school roll. There are 30 residential boarding places and 15 children currently access the residential provision. Children access the provision in two groups on two nights per week, and one child has a specialist care package and accesses the residential boarding provision four nights per week.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2021. The headteacher is currently also the acting head of care. A new head of care has been appointed and takes up this position on 31 October 2022.

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

### Inspection dates: 18 to 20 October 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 **good**

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

**Date of previous inspection:** 15 February 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The children enjoy staying in residency. Staying in this setting provides children with the opportunity to make friends and socialise. The children receive good support from staff who know them well. The staff have a warm and nurturing approach towards the children and this approach helps the children to quickly settle and enjoy their stay.

There is good communication between school staff and residential staff. This sharing of information helps to make sure that children receive the support that they need in both settings. The residential routine helps children to settle in school and prepares them for learning. Some children who struggle to come into school are transitioning positively from residency and now their school attendance has significantly improved. This joint approach to supporting children helps to make sure that they continue to make both academic and social progress.

The children enjoy a range of activities in school and in the community. These trips provide the children with a range of experiences. In residency, they have fun playing in the outdoor play areas, doing arts and crafts, and they enjoy celebration parties. One parent commented, 'Children can live a normal life now and do trips out that they could not before.'

The children make progress in all areas of their development. They become more independent and learn a range of skills that help them in daily life. Skills they learn include brushing their teeth and getting dressed, and some children learn how to go to the toilet independently. The staff work with families to help children use their skills at home. This improves life for the children and their families.

Children learn about the importance of being healthy. Topics they cover include healthy eating and physical exercise. The staff help children to manage health issues with the use of prescribed medication. New procedures are in place around safe medication administration. There are also improvements to managers' oversight of medication, recording, auditing and storage.

Children's emotional well-being is a high priority. There is a whole-school approach to looking after each other and supporting positive emotional well-being. Children benefit from specialist therapy on the school site. This therapy provides one-to-one support which is tailored to their needs. The therapist also offers staff advice around supporting children's individual needs. This combined approach supports children to make progress with their emotional well-being.

The staff listen to the children's wishes and feelings. As a result, children feel a sense of value and belonging. Children also have weekly meetings where they tell the staff what activities they would like to do. Where possible, staff act on their requests. If they cannot, the staff explain why.

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

The staff have a good understanding of risks to each child. Details of individual risks to children are on their risk assessments, and these documents detail actions for staff to follow to manage and reduce these risks. For one child, information was not fully transferred from the safeguarding recording system into the risk assessment. This is not affecting the care of the child; however, it could cause confusion for staff when managing this area of risk.

The children learn how to stay safe. They learn to recognise danger. Some children learn skills such as basic first aid and how to help others in an emergency. Others learn about the risks of fire, crime, bullying and how to stay safe in the community.

There are clear and appropriate boundaries in place. Children enjoy weekly awards where they gain recognition for good behaviour and achievements. Staff have good relationships with the children. They draw on these relationships to support the children when they are in crisis. There have been no physical interventions since the last inspection.

Safeguarding systems are effective. The staff have regular safeguarding training. The training helps them to recognise the signs of harm. Staff know how to report and record any concerns about the children. The staff and designated safeguarding leads use the recording systems to monitor concerns and act where needed to protect the children.

When any safeguarding issues arise, the designated safeguarding lead and the head teacher are quick to act. They share information effectively with others, such as the local authority designated officer. This way of working allows issues to be investigated quickly. The designated safeguarding lead and the headteacher learn from situations and take action to put their learning into practice to continually review and improve safety for children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The headteacher is currently the acting head of care. A new head of care has been recently appointed and starts at the end of October 2022. The headteacher leads by example. He has high expectations around the care for the children. He is aspirational for the children to achieve their potential.

The headteacher is keen to continually develop the residential provision. To do this, he ensures he is progressing his understanding of the residential standards and the associated framework. He is innovative in his approach to staff development. The headteacher has effective support networks with other schools to help him improve the residential provision. The headteacher ensures that the residential service is a key part of the school. He promotes the importance for children of effective communication between school and the residence.

The headteacher knows the areas of strength and areas for development. He has made sure that the national minimum standards that were not met at the last inspection have now been addressed. He has plans in place which help him identify where he needs to make changes. The focus of the headteacher ensures that the residential service is meeting the aims of the statement of purpose.

The headteacher prioritises the needs of the children. He makes sure that children have opportunities to share their views, and where he can he acts on these. Children's progress is monitored through targets. The targets are individualised to the children's needs. The regular review of these targets ensures that children continue to make progress.

Staff receive excellent support and encouragement from the headteacher. This includes regular creative supervision sessions that are linked to the national minimum standards and the framework for residential special schools. Working this way strengthens staff knowledge of the principles which underpin their work. From the supervision sessions, the staff can reflect on their practice and identify strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher analyses common themes of development from supervision and then carries out group supervisions. In these sessions, staff reflect on any gaps in their knowledge and learning is delivered to improve staff practice.

The board of governors has good oversight of the residential setting. The governors visit residency and provide reports to assure themselves that children are receiving good care. The independent person also makes regular visits to the residential provision. The visitor focuses on the experiences of children and how the service is running. Leaders respond to any recommendations the visitor makes.

The headteacher works closely with other services. He makes sure there is good communication so that the children receive the support that they need. The headteacher ensures there are good links with parents and regularly consults with them to make sure they are happy with the service. This consultation also helps him to identify areas to improve.

Leaders and managers across this service encourage children to celebrate their differences. They help children to develop their self-identity and be proud of who they are. Leaders promote respect and understanding of other needs, cultures, religions and sexual orientation.

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

### **Recommendation**

- Leaders should ensure that risk assessments are updated without delay.  
(Residential special schools: national minimum standards 5.2)

### **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:** SC040510

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Roland Cooke

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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