

St Anne's School and Sixth Form College

Boothferry Road, Hessle HU13 9AR

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is maintained by a local authority. The school has 172 children on roll, who have a range of complex learning and physical disabilities. Most children have education and healthcare plans.

There are 45 children, aged between seven and 19 years old, who enjoy short breaks in the residential provision. Up to 17 children can stay in residency at a time. Most children have one or two overnight stays per week, with some also having weekend and holiday breaks. There is flexibility for extra nights on a planned and emergency basis.

The head of care has been in post for 14 years. She has qualifications appropriate to her role in the residential special school.

The school is in Hessle, Hull. It recently moved to this site. The school and residential provision are newly built and are contained within the same building. The school has a range of facilities, including sensory rooms, a hydrotherapy pool, outside play equipment and gardens.

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

Inspection dates: 29 November to 1 December 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: 7 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

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

The school has been through significant changes, including moving to a new site. Despite the move being delayed several times, detailed preparations were effective. Children have adapted well to their new environment. However, this and other significant issues, including staff shortages in school, have affected aspects of the residential provision.

Children thoroughly enjoy their short breaks in the residential provision. Many attend for several years. They come to know the staff and routines in residency very well. Children also make friends with other children. As well as being fun, these friendships help children to develop their social skills.

Staff develop strong relationships with children. These relationships are based on detailed knowledge of children's needs and preferences. Staff use their understanding of children to provide them with individualised care. This means that children's needs are met, and they enjoy their time in residency.

Parents and carers greatly value the support that their children receive in residency. They know that their children are happy and settled. Children's short breaks give parents and carers time to spend with other family members. Parents and carers are confident that their children are well looked after. This gives them essential peace of mind.

The residential accommodation is new, clean and bright. It provides flexible areas for children to enjoy. Creative use of the available space means that matching of children's needs is very successful. However, there are gaps in the use of visual communication tools. For example, some rooms do not have symbols to tell children the purpose of the room. For children who are helped by this form of communication, their independence is not being supported.

Staff manage children's complex health needs well. Specialists come into the school to provide expert support and advice. For example, school nurses train staff to carry out gastrostomy feeding and to give medication accurately. Occupational therapists give advice about specialist equipment. This means that all children, regardless of their health needs, are well looked after.

Children enjoy a range of activities during their short breaks. On-site activities include judo and trampolining. Some children delight in taking part in creative sensory experiences. Trips out of residency, for example to a wildlife park or the seaside, are popular. These activities help children to keep fit, as well as providing them with positive social experiences.

Children learn a range of independence skills in the residential provision. Skills are personalised, such as meal preparation, getting dressed or keeping bedrooms tidy. These skills help children to prepare for adulthood. As well as increasing their autonomy, children's confidence improves. This helps them to develop their sense of self-worth.

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

The head of care is the only designated safeguarding lead for the school. For a significant period, the head of care has raised concerns about not having enough time to fulfil both roles. Some aspects of oversight have been affected because there has been no change. Although there are plans to improve this situation, these difficulties are likely to last for several more months.

Children generally respond well to care provided by staff. The need for physical intervention is low. However, on occasion, staff respond to children with unauthorised methods of restraint. There is no evidence of children being hurt or excessive force being used. Oversight of physical intervention is not consistently effective. This is because of staffing shortages in the school and the demands on the head of care. This means that senior staff do not identify concerns and any learning from these incidents. This leaves children at risk of being involved in other unauthorised restraints.

Recruitment of new staff does not consistently follow statutory guidance. On one occasion, the head of care did not clarify that a referee was authorised to provide a reference. The head of care carried out further enquiries during the inspection. No concerns about the member of staff were revealed. The head of care has new processes in place to prevent any similar shortfalls.

Staff understand the risks that children face. Individualised risk assessments are regularly reviewed, so that they remain pertinent. For example, staff closely supervise children who might wander off during trips in the community. As a result, children are safe, while continuing to enjoy fun, enriching activities.

Children learn about being safe. They have personalised targets that help them to understand dangers. For example, they learn about risks inside the home. Some children practise skills such as crossing the road safely. Such knowledge helps children when they are away from the security of the residential provision.

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

The residential provision is led by a knowledgeable, skilled head of care. She strives to provide the best care for children. However, she is hindered in carrying out her role because of demands on her time. This affects the quality of oversight she provides.

Staff feel well supported by the head of care. They are aware of the challenges of her dual roles, but feel that they can still ask for help and guidance. Most staff have not had formal supervision for many months. This means that some practice issues may go unnoticed and unresolved.

The head of care responds to the views of children. The children's rights' participation officer meets with children regularly and records their wishes and feelings. The head of care ensures that, whenever possible, children's requests are acted on. Children see their hopes fulfilled. This gives them a powerful message that they have as much right as anyone to voice their opinions.

Staff have the knowledge and skills to perform well in their roles. They are qualified in, or are working towards, the required qualification. Staff undertake a wide range of learning opportunities. For example, they do regular training on children's preferred communication styles. The breadth of this learning means that staff are equipped to consistently meet children's needs.

The head of care works closely with the professional network. She ensures that information is shared promptly in the best interests of the children. The head of care escalates concerns, for example when assessments are delayed. This increases the chances of children receiving the care and support that they need.

The school is well supported by an active governing body. Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders. They advocate on behalf of the school with the local authority and other agencies. Governors carry out an audit of leaders' skills and knowledge. This ensures that they have the right people in place to support the development of the school.

An experienced independent visitor undertakes half-termly visits to the residential provision. The visitor talks to children and understands the value of residency to them and their families. However, the visitor does not fully evaluate the quality of the care provided to children. For example, the visitor did not identify any shortfalls in physical intervention records. This means that an earlier opportunity to rectify issues was lost.

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:

- Leaders should ensure that a clear and unambiguous written record is kept of the use of any restraint. The head of the residential provision or equivalent regularly reviews any instances of the use of all types of restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice and minimise the use of restraint. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 26, paragraph 20.6)
- Leaders should ensure that all staff have at least termly supervision and a formal annual appraisal of their performance. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 32, paragraph 26.6)
- Leaders should ensure that the role of the designated safeguarding lead carries a significant level of responsibility, and that the postholder should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources, and support needed to carry out the role effectively. ('Keeping children safe in education', page 29, paragraph 104)
- Leaders should ensure that any references are from the candidate's current employer and have been completed by a senior person with appropriate authority. ('Keeping children safe in education', page 54, paragraph 223)

Recommendations

- Leaders should ensure that monitoring visits include checks on the school's records of restraint (including restrictive interventions). Visits provide an evaluation of the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 8, paragraph 3.2)
- Leaders should ensure that children are supported to participate in important decisions about their lives, using means appropriate to their level of understanding, and provided with support where they have additional communication needs. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 24, paragraph 18.3)

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: SC056736

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Lesley Davis

Type of school: Residential Special School

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