

Elemore Hall School

Elemore Hall School, Littletown, Durham DH6 1QD
Elemore Hall School, Chilton, Ferryhill DL17 0HP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Elemore Hall School is a maintained residential special school for pupils who have social, emotional or mental health difficulties. The school operates across three sites, following an expansion in September 2021. There are two sites for children who are 11 to 16 years old, both of which have residential provision. The expansion also involved a third site, which offers alternative provision.

There is one headteacher across all three sites, who is supported by his senior leadership team. There are 167 pupils on roll at the two sites with residential provision. Accommodation is provided for up to 25 boys at the Elemore Hall site and for up to 20 girls and boys at the Windlestone site. The school provides flexible stays for pupils, from one to four nights per week, depending on their needs.

Accommodation is provided in single rooms within or close to the main school buildings. Both sites have outdoor spaces, which can be used for activities such as playing sport and bushcraft skills.

Each site has a head of care and both individuals are experienced. One has a suitable leadership qualification, and the other is working towards this qualification.

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

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 December 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: 28 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children thoroughly enjoy their stays in the residential provision. Staff are consistently warm and nurturing towards children. This helps children to recognise that staff care about them. Parents and carers value the opportunities that children have and the progress that they make. One parent said that the residential provision was like being part of an extra family. The value of the residential provision is considerable for children and their families.

Children enjoy a range of activities during residential time. Trips out include visits to a theme park or local places of interest. Children regularly go swimming, roller skating and climbing. Staff take photos of these activities as reminders for children of how much they achieve. This reinforces children's confidence. For some children, these opportunities are first-time experiences. Many children have little chance for such activities outside of school. Children are building memories of positive events. They also develop their social skills, and many children develop friendships through taking part in these adventures.

Staff understand and meet children's health needs. Physical fitness and healthy eating are ongoing themes. The emphasis on being active also supports children's emotional well-being. Children talk to staff about their worries, because of the positive relationships that they enjoy. Children trust staff to help them, which reduces their anxieties.

Staff help children to make educational progress. Residential staff also provide classroom support. Children respond well to these staff, who they know and trust. Residential children's school attendance is excellent. This is because of the routines that are established in residential time and supported within families. This means that children's availability to learn is maximised. As they make academic progress, their self-esteem increases.

Children learn a range of skills that help them to become independent. Staff tailor children's learning to a level that they understand. For example, children practise cooking, budgeting, shopping for food and doing their laundry. These skills are helping them to prepare for adulthood. Children take pride in their abilities and delight in demonstrating what they have learned.

Children learn about the world around them. They explore topics such as racism, different cultures and faiths. Staff talk to children about the importance of tolerance. This is helping them to understand British values and learn about the importance of respect and equality.

Children provide their views about what they do during their residential stays. They feel they are valued when staff listen and respond to their wishes and feelings. They

learn that they have as much right as anyone to voice their opinions. This is a powerful message for these children and one that builds self-belief.

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

Staff prepare individualised risk assessments for children. Risk assessments help staff to understand and reduce children's specific risks. For example, appropriate levels of supervision from staff mean that children do not go missing. For some children, this is an indication of significant progress.

Staff take part in safeguarding training. For example, staff learn about exploitation and online harm. Staff use their learning to have engaging conversations with children about these and other issues. This helps children to use the internet safely and to avoid dangers in the community.

There is a whole-school approach to anti-bullying. Staff use creative methods to help children identify the causes and effects of bullying. Children learn how to report concerns. The value of this support is evident in the residential provision, where there are no concerns about such behaviour.

Children's behaviour in the residential provision is very good. Staff use their positive relationships with children to implement clear expectations and routines. Staff spot emerging difficulties and help children to become calm quickly. This helps children to feel safe. Staff do not need to resort to physical intervention with children. Some children make remarkable progress with their behaviour because of the effective approach of staff.

Health and safety arrangements for both sites are excellent. Staff responsible for these matters are diligent. They ensure that all checks and drills take place as required. Follow-up actions are completed quickly. The issues connected with old buildings, and those with inherent complexities, are very well understood. The measures to deal with problems are effective. This means that children's time in school is safe and largely uninterrupted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The school continues to be led by an inspirational headteacher who values the well-being of children above all else. He recognises the value of the residential provision to children and their families. Both residential settings are well attended by children, with little spare capacity. So many children benefit from their stays because of the importance that leaders attach to the residential provision.

The expansion of the school is successful. The development of a unified ethos is ongoing. Leaders pool knowledge and skills, which means that they learn from each other. There are an increasing number of shared activities across the two sites. For example, residential children from one site travel to the other to use the all-weather sports pitch. This means that activities such as football can take place all year round.

Leaders respond effectively to children's individual needs. They offer flexible support to children who experience difficulties. Leaders advocate strenuously on children's behalf, including when other professionals do not fulfil their responsibilities. This helps to reduce children's anxieties. For one child, this made a significant difference to their experiences.

Staffing is very stable. There is a low turnover of staff within the residential provision. This means that children are cared for by staff who know them extremely well. This is reassuring for children and their families.

Staff do a variety of training to help them meet children's needs. Some of this training is innovative. For example, staff take part in learning events, such as promoting reading. Staff use this knowledge to encourage children to read in everyday life. This is woven into residential time, such as independence planning. This extends the value of children's learning in the school day.

Staff feel fully supported by leaders. Staff talk to the heads of care about any questions or concerns. They have regular scheduled supervision, as well as ad hoc sessions. One system for recording and tracking staff progress is used across both sites. This is effective and enables leaders to oversee staff development.

The school is well supported by an experienced board of governors. The profile of the residential provision within the governing body has grown since the last inspection. The governor with responsibility for the residential provision regularly visits and speaks to children. This is helping to ensure the ongoing development of the residential provision.

Independent visits have not taken place regularly since the last inspection. This reduces the opportunity for children to talk to someone independent of the school and raise any concerns that they might have. The school has put in place new arrangements, but these are yet to begin.

Leaders do not know the revised minimum standards for residential special schools. Work is planned to take place in the new year to fully implement the new standards. This will be four months after they came into force. There has been no impact on children of this shortfall.

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 they fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met. In particular, leaders should ensure that the national minimum standards for residential special schools are understood and applied throughout the residential provision. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 8, paragraph 2.4)
- Leaders should ensure that the governing body, trustees or proprietor of the school appoint a representative who is independent of the leadership and management of the school to visit the residential provision six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 8, paragraph 3.1)

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: SC040508

Headteacher: Mr Richard Royle

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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