

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 children aged between eight and 18 years. There are currently 119 children on roll. The academy provides extended days and residential places during term time. There are eight residential places with 20 children accessing the provision from Monday to Thursday.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 February 2023

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: 29 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The residential and extended day experiences clearly benefit children. This is because they stay in a highly inclusive setting where their individuality is recognised, supported and celebrated. Children make excellent progress in all aspects of their development. They receive individualised nurturing care and support, which means that they make sustainable progress. Residential staff work collaboratively with staff across the school and use their in-depth knowledge of each child to ensure that support progresses their development.

A stable and consistent staff team, led by a committed head of care, has been central to children's development and progress. Children and staff have trusting relationships. Staff know the children very well. They understand their complexities and individual differences. Staff members commented on their pleasure at seeing the children mature, grow, and achieve beyond expectations. A positive sense of well-being, care and fun is apparent when visiting the residential provision.

Acting on the children's views and opinions is embedded into practice. Children influence all decisions about the day-to-day running of the residential provision. Each child contributes to developing their written care and support plans, which plays an important part in the targets that are developed. School and residential staff work closely together to set suitable targets that the children can achieve in both settings. Targets are adjustable and reviewed regularly.

Residential staff are highly effective at monitoring children's health needs and ensuring that they have the appropriate support. Through liaising closely with parents and carers, the staff have the necessary detailed knowledge of the children's medical conditions and medication requirements. Medicines are administered safely, and effective processes are in place.

Developing children's independence skills is a priority as they move through the school towards the next stage of their lives. Staff set specific targets to advance children's practical daily living skills so that they can successfully look after themselves. There is also a focus on increasing their knowledge of how to access the facilities and services that they will need as young adults. Staff ensure that planning for children leaving the school begins well in advance to support their successful transition. One parent reported, 'The residential staff are incredible. The independence work they do with my son is fantastic and he accesses a range of activities he would not get anywhere else.'

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

Children's safety and well-being are a priority. The head of care is also the designated safeguarding lead. She is extremely knowledgeable and is passionate in her efforts to ensure that children are safeguarded. This not only applies to keeping them safe while they are at the school but also when they are at home in their local communities.

All staff receive comprehensive information and training in how to keep children safe. This ensures that everybody knows and understands the key messages emerging from best practice and any changes in legislation and guidance. Staff know how to initiate safeguarding procedures if required and understand their own roles and responsibilities regarding keeping children safe.

Designated safeguarding leads coordinate a consistent approach to safeguarding concerns. The electronic system for recording concerns provides a meticulous audit trail that demonstrates how procedures have been followed and how practice is reviewed following incidents. Positive relationships with local agencies further underpin the strong ethos of safeguarding that runs through the entire school.

Staff recognise that children's actions and behaviour are all forms of communication. The excellent understanding of each child's emotional needs, using cross-school plans, means that responses to signs of anxiety or distress are swift. Joint working across school means that children benefit from a consistent approach to behaviour. A nurtured approach is used which supports children to reflect on their own behaviours. This helps children to develop resilience and helps to inform them to make safer choices as they progress. Consequently, children now identify their own early indicators of anxiety. As a direct impact of this approach, there has been a significant reduction in the use of physical intervention, and children are developing their own behaviour management strategies.

Staff are vigilant both on and off site, and good staffing levels enable vulnerable children to explore new activities and experiences in the community. Children do not go missing. However, staff are aware of the protocols to follow should this occur. Staff are clear about the whistle-blowing process and say that they would have no hesitation in using it should the need arise.

The recruitment, selection and vetting of staff are effective and promote children's safety. Health and safety in the residential provision are well managed. Routine servicing and checks take place as required. Fire safety precautions are checked on a regular basis, which includes servicing firefighting equipment, testing alarms and carrying out evacuation drills. Risk assessments are routinely reviewed and updated.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

School leaders and the head of care work together with a shared aim of making sure that the residential service continues to make a positive difference to the lives of children and their families. This is achieved by using research-based practice to continue to develop the residential provision. Leaders have created a dynamic and inspirational environment where children and staff can grow and gain an extensive range of new skills. Subsequently, children receive the highest quality of care and support and enjoy a seamless journey through school and residence.

Experienced, dedicated staff provide excellent care to children. They are creative, reflective, and thinking all the time about ways to improve children's experiences and the progress that they make. Staff speak highly of the head of care, who provides exceptional leadership and management. They benefit hugely from regular supervision and team meetings where they value her reflective approach and strong support for them on a personal level.

Excellent systems are in place for monitoring the residential provision internally and externally. These include self-evaluation, independent visitors and consultation with stakeholders. Reports are shared with the governing body. This enables governors to have a clear oversight of the impact that the provision has on outcomes for children.

Partnerships between leaders and external professionals are exceptionally strong. These are supported by an active governing body. Together, they fully understand the positive impact residency has on children's social, emotional and academic progress and development. This means that children receive a well-organised package of care and education.

Staff work closely with children's families. Parents are exceptionally positive about the care their children receive. They say that the residential provision provides huge benefits for their children. One parent reported, 'The staff are amazing in what they do. The life skills and targets that are set really help with learning independence. The staff are so warm and welcoming, it's lovely to see.'

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 Robert Newton and Miss Samantha Howarth

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Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

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