

Swalcliffe Park School

Swalcliffe, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 5EP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school provides care for residential pupils for up to 42 weeks of the year. It provides education and residential care for up to 32 resident pupils, aged from 10 to 19, who are on the autism spectrum disorder. There are currently 28 pupils, living in the four houses. The provider is a registered charity.

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 14 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Students make exceptional progress at the school. Many of the students have experienced unstable and disrupted education prior to admission. Students benefit from the excellent support provided by multidisciplinary teams across the school, external professionals and families. Staff and students share a deeply embedded ethos which centres on the 'Quality of Life' approach. Students are supported to set ambitious aims and goals for their futures. They then work closely with dedicated staff to achieve outstanding outcomes, including university placements, college and employment. Students also make transformative progress in their emotional, social and personal development.

The school keeps track of the progress children make for up to five years after leaving the school. This helps staff know that the support provided in the residential setting has had long-lasting and significant benefits to children's life chances.

Students are assigned a dedicated key worker at the point of admission. This relationship often lasts from the very start of the child's time at the school to the point of departure. The key worker also forms a vital link between families and the school. The strength of relationships between families, children and staff is the cornerstone of the success of the school's approach.

Parents express high levels of trust and belief in what the school is able to achieve for their children. Parent feedback is universally positive. A parent said: 'The school has changed my son's life. He now has a positive future due to the opportunities made open to him and through the school's support in both his educational and social needs. The school is excellent in every respect, as are the staff.' This is indicative of all parents' comments received during the inspection.

Staff and children have developed high-quality relationships full of openness, affection and warmth. Students talk eloquently about the influence the school has had on their own personal growth, self-worth and feelings of independence. Children are able to be themselves and feel part of a caring community where they feel a real sense of belonging.

Children receive excellent support with all areas of their lives and skilled specialist help is available to support them when they need it. The clinical team works closely alongside staff in recognition that much of the therapeutic work with children happens in day-to-day interactions with staff in school and boarding. Staff value the insight and professional expertise available to them at all times. Clinical support enables them to work to consistently high standards to meet the needs of students.

Students feel heard and valued. Students and staff highlighted many examples of the ways in which the student voice has helped inform the growth and development of the school. Students recognise the important role of their student council. They have an active role in planning and decision-making about their future pathways when they leave the school.

Students benefit from a broad range of opportunities to engage in exciting opportunities in and out of school. Children talk animatedly about the sports and recreational opportunities available to them. They also praise the quality of their accommodation and the whole school environment.

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

Students live in a safe and supportive environment. A skilled safeguarding team ensures that any concerns are identified swiftly and managed well. Staff create effective working relationships with safeguarding professionals outside the school, which ensures that students are provided with safe care. The school's safeguarding lead makes good use of wider safeguarding networks to share good practice and enhance the safeguarding culture at the school. She prioritises her own professional development to ensure that she provides competent and skilled support to students and staff alike.

Local area safeguarding professionals have close links with the school, providing support, advice and training for staff. The school has an open and transparent approach to all safeguarding concerns and seeks professional guidance whenever required.

Staff produce high-quality risk assessments and management strategies, working in close cooperation with the clinical leads. This ensures that safety plans for children are based on well-informed assessments of their needs and kept under review. Staff praise the excellent feedback and support from safeguarding leads when they raise any concerns. Staff are also aware of their position in the wider network of safeguarding support around students.

Children and parents have absolute trust in the safeguarding culture at the school. Students spoke about strong staff interventions around bullying and antisocial behaviour. They describe the boarding accommodation as a relaxed, calm and safe space to live in.

Staff's effective use of the school's social curriculum, key working and transparent dialogue with students has supported students to learn to understand and manage their own behaviour. Staff place a strong focus on the creation of positive relationships with others and students recognise the impact that this has on the environment around them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders at the school are passionate and highly motivated. They share a genuine belief in the processes and approach adopted by the school. Their confidence is borne out in the transformational outcomes for students at the school. Leaders are expert at adapting and listening to others, and they make changes that continually strive for excellence in the care and support provided to students. Parents highlighted the flexibility of response and respect for individual difference as key strengths of the school.

Leaders demonstrate a highly developed understanding of the needs of each individual student. This is replicated across the entire staff team. They inspire the confidence and trust of their staff and engender a total commitment to the students and the school.

Staff benefit from high-quality professional and personal support. Staff value the support they get from leaders but also point out the excellent support that they get from their colleagues. Leaders have created some excellent initiatives with regard to promoting mental health and well-being.

Leaders make effective use of internal and external monitoring. They have sought out external expertise to review all aspects of the school, providing insight, advice and guidance which enhance the quality of the student experience.

Proactive governors, whose pride in the school is palpable, have high expectations. They hold staff to account to ensure that standards at the school are met and exceeded wherever possible.

Leaders are dedicated to sharing good practice widely. They have set up a network of schools to share the approaches that the school has developed. They also provide advice, support and guidance to a range of external professionals working with students with special educational needs.

Leaders' use of analytics to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school is remarkable. The 'Quality of Life' approach generates reliable information that is accessible and easy to interpret. Students use this information to help them recognize the progress that they are making to reach their goals. Staff use it to enhance their practice. Leaders use it to consistently identify new and innovative ways of working.

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: 1266836

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Rob Piner

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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