

Loxley Hall

Loxley Hall School, Stafford Road, UTTOXETER, Staffordshire ST14 8RS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Loxley Hall School is part of Manor Hall Academy Trust. The school offers day and residential places to boys aged 11 to 16 years with social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties. There are 100 pupils on roll, of whom 43 pupils access the residential provision and 29 pupils have overnight stays. The school is situated in a rural setting a few miles outside of the town of Uttoxeter. The main building is a large three-storey country house in which classrooms, offices, a main kitchen and a dining hall are situated. There are two residential houses on the school site, which can provide overnight stays for up to 10 boys at any one time.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 March 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: 1 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

There are currently 43 children accessing the residential provision. Some children stay for one or two nights a week. Other children stay for dinner and activities with their friends and then go home to sleep. This flexible approach to boarding means that children's individual needs are catered for. It also supports those children who are not able to stay overnight to benefit from many of the opportunities that residence has to offer.

This is an outstanding service because children make exceptional progress across all areas of their development as a direct result of their experiences at this provision. Children are better able to communicate with their peers and manage their emotions, and benefit from significantly improved mental health. Furthermore, the school data shows that children who attend the residential provision have better academic outcomes as they can build on a far greater range of experiences and skills that only residence can provide.

Children enjoy exceptionally warm and nurturing relationships with staff. Staff have been able to break down children's reluctance to receiving positive care, including hugs and appropriate physical contact. Mutual respect is embedded in the culture of this provision. This enables staff to support children in a manner that children will accept and learn from.

Staff provide children with a consistent routine. This creates an atmosphere where children know what to expect, and understand the expectations of them. This, along with the positive relationships that children have with each other, helps to create a calm and positive environment.

Children's views are at the heart of all staff practice. This is threaded through all staff practice and documentation. Children's plans reflect the voice and wishes of the child. When reading them, the child comes 'alive', and it is clear to the reader how to care for the child to give them the best positive outcomes in life.

The residence is described as 'a home from home'. Children have made requests such as having their mum's 'upside down cottage pie', which is now on the menu. Another child requested to have home-made donner kebabs and a chocolate cake to celebrate his birthday. The child told the inspector how much he enjoyed this.

Children are empowered to try new experiences as well as continuing to do the things that they like. One child has found a new hobby in fishing as a result. There are a range of activities that take place at the school and off site. Children excitedly told the inspector about the residential camp that they went on and how they buried each other in the sand. For some children, this was the first time that they had been to the beach. Another child talked about the ghost hunts that they had and how they

had learned to swim during their time in residence. Some parents told the inspectors that without the residential provision their child would not leave their bedroom at home.

Parents consistently report positive relationships and communication between themselves and staff in residence. They are telephoned weekly for general updates and contacted when specific issues arise. Parents are clear about the positive impact that residence is having on their child's independence skills, but also the positive impact on their emotional well-being. For example, building friendships and having fun activities to look forward to give their child a sense of belonging and excitement. A parent commented that their child had 'come on leaps and bounds since joining residency. My son has developed his confidence in himself, and his independence skills have improved'.

The residence is well maintained, warm and welcoming. Children are supported in making decisions about who they share a room with. For some, this has led to lifelong friendships. For example, two children who used to share a room now share a flat due to the strong friendship they made during their time in residency.

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

Children's and staff's safety and emotional well-being are prioritised. Staff adopt a whole-school approach to understanding the importance of safeguarding and everyone's well-being. This ranges from the cleaner to the headteacher. Each member of staff is extremely clear about their role and who to report any concerns to should the need arise.

There is a team of skilled leaders who are responsible for ensuring that any safeguarding measures are highly effective. Having a team of staff to oversee the safeguarding ensures that issues are quickly dealt with, shared and action put in place to help to keep everyone safe. This also adds an extra layer of oversight to ensure that every avenue has been explored and considered. A high level of professional challenge within the service ensures that the right actions are being taken at the right time and by the right people.

Staff use research-based practice and training that underpins the whole school ethos. They use an approach to behaviour management that is strongly linked to better well-being. In turn, there is better academic outcomes for children. Staff are proactive in identifying children who require additional support. Individual children are supported in school, at home and in residency.

Anti-bullying is high on all staff and children's agenda. This is a consistent theme within school and residency. Children in residency are clear that although disagreements between children do happen, bullying does not. However, children understand how to report bullying if it does occur.

Because of the exceptional relationships with staff, children do not go missing, and it is rare that children are held to keep them safe. Staff are skilled at being able to de-escalate behaviour at the earliest opportunity. As a result, it is rare that any unwanted behaviours take place in residency, despite this being a reason why they are attending the school.

All children are clear about the expected behaviours. Staff are skilled at helping children to recognise the smallest achievements and to celebrate these. Children are awarded certificates, merits that can be exchanged for high-street vouchers, and 'golden tickets' that are instant rewards in the form of a sweet treat.

The school and residency environments are safe and well managed. Staff understand that health and safety considerations are of paramount importance for ensuring children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are aspirational and influential in changing the lives of children in their care. Leaders and managers are ambitious, have high expectations for what all children can achieve, and ensure high standards of care. This is not just rolled out within the school and residency, but also into the wider community. For example, they are working with a range of other professionals to improve their understanding of some of the challenges that the children face and how best to support them. In doing so, they are also sharing their learning, which is entrenched in research and best practice.

The head of residential care is a valued member of the school's senior leadership team. This demonstrates the importance that the school attaches to its residential provision. The head of care leads a committed team whose members want the very best for each of the children. They continuously strive to break down the barriers that children face in their emotional health or social relationships.

The head of care is a positive role model for all staff. His aspirational ethos flows through all the staff. As a result, they all strive to consistently improve their skills and the experiences for the children in their care.

The residency team work fluidly with one another. They understand each other's strengths well and complement each other. Most of the staff have worked in the residency for a number of years. They very much enjoy their jobs and spending time with the children. The stability of the staff group supports children to build long-lasting, caring relationships. Staff feel supported in their roles, and with their mental health and personal lives. This supports them to effectively work with this group of children.

When staff are new to the service, they receive a comprehensive induction programme over six months that enables them to work effectively with children and

meet their needs. Leaders have oversight of the induction progress through regular supervision. They identify staff's strengths and where further training is required.

Supervision is held consistently, with a focus on personal development and how staff will meet the needs of the children. Targets and actions are identified and reviewed at the next supervision session to ensure that they have been completed.

A comprehensive training programme supports staff to meet the needs of children. Training is renewed within timescales. Learning is unpinned by theory-based practice and has a positive impact on children. Where children have specific needs, additional training is sourced.

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: SC038729

Headteacher/teacher in charge: David Bownds

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Inspectors

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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