

Oakfield

Oakfield, Hopewell Road, Hull HU9 4HD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential special school for children between the ages of 11 and 16. There are 103 children on the school roll. All children have an education, health and care plan reflecting social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

There are two houses on the school site that are used for children's accommodation. Children stay between two and four nights per week during term time. Currently, six children have residential stays.

The headteacher has been in post for several years. The head of care has led the residential provision for two years, although she worked in the residential provision for nine years before taking up her post.

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

Inspection dates: 28 February to 2 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 1 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their time in the residential provision. They have good experiences and look forward to their stays. Some children who attend part time would like to stay for more nights. Children develop friendships with each other even though the current group of children is small. Staff successfully help children to resolve any difficulties, which enables them to make the most of their stays.

Children develop strong and trusting relationships with staff. They know staff very well and respond to them positively. All children have an identified member of staff who they can talk to if they have any worries. Children find this reassuring and routinely talk to staff about the things that matter to them most.

Children receive excellent support for their emotional well-being. A team of specialist staff gives individualised help to children. This team also provides bespoke training and support to staff from across the school. This enables residential and school staff to work together to give a consistent and coordinated response to children. As a result, children are confident that adults will help them. Over time, they make clear, measurable progress.

Children's educational needs are met. Children's attendance at lessons improves when they have regular residential stays. Staff use their positive relationships with children to support their learning. For example, some staff sit with children in their lessons to reduce their worries. This assistance helps individual children. It also enhances staff's knowledge about children's educational progress.

Children benefit from support offered to their families. The input of the parent liaison worker is bringing about real change. Help includes advice on strategies to use at home, provision of food and clothing, and support getting to appointments. As a result, parents' engagement with school staff increases and children's attendance in school improves. For some children, the effects of this support have been remarkable.

Staff support children's physical development through good-quality home-cooked meals and regular exercise. Staff talk to parents about these topics, as well as the importance of attending medical appointments. This extends the value of the support that children receive in their residential time. Medication is administered by staff who are suitably trained. On one occasion, a medication error was not identified during a management audit. There was no impact on the child and new audit processes are being implemented.

Children's independence skills improve over time. Children follow structured plans to carry out specific tasks, such as independent travel and going shopping. Children take increasing responsibility for themselves and their rooms during residential time.

Family members note an associated improvement in how much children can do for themselves at home. This is helping to prepare children for adulthood.

Children take part in a range of activities during their residential time. This includes trips to the beach, shopping, swimming and ice skating. Children also make use of the wider school facilities during their residential time. For example, they love to play hide and seek around the school when other children have gone home. These activities are vital in helping children to develop positive memories and enhance their social skills.

An independent person has not visited children in residential time. The recently appointed person has not yet started their role. Children talk to staff and other visitors to the school. However, they have not had the opportunity to talk to someone whose responsibility it is to listen to their views and experiences.

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

Staff use detailed plans to support children's behaviour. There is a significant emphasis on praise. Staff talk to children about expectations and encourage them to provide their views. For example, when a child struggles to explain verbally how they feel, they are encouraged to write to staff instead. For some children, this works remarkably well. Behaviour plans are used across the school. This means that children receive a consistent response from all staff. As a result, most children's behaviour becomes settled over time.

Staff only use physical intervention when other strategies are not effective. Staff receive training, along with regular updates, to ensure that all restraints are safe and used for the shortest time possible. The records of such incidents are very well written and include the views of the child. Management oversight is clear and helps to identify learning. Over time, the number of restraints for individual children reduces. This is because of the work that staff throughout the school do with children.

Staff prepare individualised risk assessments to help identify and reduce children's risks. Strategies for staff to use are specific and pertinent to current concerns. Staff talk to children about matters that might cause them harm, including online safety and bullying. Staff also speak to parents about how they can keep their children safe when they are at home. This consistent approach across school and home helps to promote children's safety.

Children rarely go missing from the residential provision. High levels of supervision and structured time reduces the likelihood of this happening. On one occasion, school and residential staff did not take account of previous risks, which resulted in a child leaving the school. Staff responded swiftly to safeguard the child. Amended arrangements are now in place to monitor children coming to and going from the residential provision.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The residential provision is led by a dedicated and committed head of care. She is swift to carry out suggestions for improvements. The head of care has made good progress against shortfalls identified at the last inspection. She has a strong vision of how she wants the residential provision to develop. Her leadership means that the residential provision continues to be seen as an integral part of the school, as senior leaders value the additional support that children receive.

Leaders understand children's views and experiences. Children regularly provide their thoughts about their residential stays. Staff listen to children and respond to their requests when they can. This includes matters such as their choices of activity and their views for their statutory reviews. Therefore, children learn that they have a voice and a right to be heard.

Staff feel well supported by residential leaders. They find the managers approachable and available when they need to talk. Staff receive regular supervision, where they reflect on children's progress. However, staff do not receive an annual appraisal of their practice. This means that they do not have the opportunity to reflect on their wider development and set targets for the following months.

Staff receive a wide array of training to help them to provide high-quality care for children. Recently, this included therapeutic skills training, which staff found extremely useful. Staff would benefit from training on the use of language in children's records and on transgender issues. This would add to the knowledge and skills that they already have.

The school is well supported by an active governing body. Governors offer support and challenge to senior leaders. Governors are aware of current challenges for the school, such as staff retention. A governor with responsibility for the residential provision visits and gets to know the children. Reports from these visits are very helpful to the head of care, who values this additional oversight.

The residential provision also benefits from an experienced independent visitor. His recommendations have led to several changes in practice in recent months. This is helping the development of the provision.

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 the school identifies at least one person, other than a parent, outside the staff and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the independent person. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 23, paragraph 17.2)
- Leaders should ensure that all staff have a formal annual appraisal of their performance. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 32, paragraph 26.6)

Points for improvement

- Leaders should ensure that arrangements for auditing medication records are effective so that any errors are identified and practice improves. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 18, paragraph 12.8)
- Leaders should ensure that school staff and residential staff work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, ensuring that risk assessments take account of any previous concerns. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 20, paragraph 13.2)
- Leaders should consider the use of language in children's records and ensure that the training programme for staff includes learning about transgender issues. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 32, paragraph 26.1)

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: SC466264

Headteacher: Rachel Davies

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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