

Oversands School

Witherslack Hall, Witherslack, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6SD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is an independent day and residential special school at the edge of a small village in Cumbria. The residential accommodation comprises three houses on the school site.

There is a headteacher at the school, and a care manager who supports the residential provision.

The school currently provides places for 58 boys. Of these, six are currently resident in school.

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 March 2023

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: 19 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from high-quality and individualised care. They are supported by a consistent staff team and have developed positive and trusting relationships with staff. Children are settled, learning new skills and growing in confidence. One parent said, 'He absolutely loves it, this is the best place he could ever have been.' Parents comment on the difference that being at the school has made to their children's lives.

Transitions are carefully and sensitively planned for those who are new to residential. Children have the opportunity to visit and stay for tea. This ensures that children get to know the staff and other children and reduces any anxieties they have about coming to stay.

Children enjoy a range of positive experiences in the residential provision and in the community. Activities include cadets, running club, football, drama and dance. The children are also encouraged to get involved in events in the local community and have enjoyed a group holiday together. These activities help children to develop their interests and talents, as well as build their confidence and self-esteem.

Children make good progress in school. One child has made significant progress in terms of their attendance at school. Children are making clear progress in line with their education, health and care plans. Targets are shared and reviewed across the school and the residential provision. Key workers review children's targets with them. This helps children to understand the progress that they make and the areas that they still need to work on.

Staff are skilled at developing meaningful and supportive relationships with the children. These are characterised by emotional warmth and humorous interactions, which the inspectors observed throughout the inspection.

Children receive support to stay healthy. Staff promote physical exercise and healthy diets. Children benefit from the in-house therapy team. Staff regularly contribute to the 'team around the child' meetings about individual children. This ensures that children experience individualised support that meets their needs.

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

Staff understand children's risks and vulnerabilities well. Risk assessments include known risks and actions for staff to take to reduce these. Regular communication with parents ensures that staff have up-to-date information when children return to school from home.

Children rarely go missing from the residential provision. When they do, staff are aware of the actions they must take to locate children as quickly as possible. There have been no issues of bullying in the residential provision. Staff receive training in

respect of identifying bullying and carry out work with the children on positive relationships with their peers.

Staff have received safeguarding training. The designated safeguarding lead delivers seven-minute briefings on a range of safeguarding matters. This ensures that staff have an up-to-date knowledge on current themes in relation to safeguarding. Any safeguarding concerns are dealt with appropriately and in line with guidance. There is good oversight of safeguarding by the designated safeguarding team.

There are good routines and clear boundaries in place, which helps children to develop a sense of safety and security.

Overall, there are very few incidents in the residential provision. Staff know the children very well. As a result, they can prevent situations escalating. They use their skills to minimise incidents. Physical interventions are rare in the residential provision. Records show that these are carried out in line with children's behaviour plans. While children always receive a debrief following a physical intervention, staff involved are not consistently offered a debrief.

Robust staff recruitment is well established, which means that only people who are safe to work with children do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Suitably trained and experienced leaders and managers lead the residential provision effectively and efficiently. The experience of staying at the school enhances the children's life opportunities and is making a difference to children's lives.

Leaders and managers have an excellent understanding of children's needs. They understand children's plans and can evidence the progress that children make over time.

Training and development opportunities are effective, which ensures that staff have the skills and knowledge to meet children's specific needs. Staff spoken to said that they are well led and managed and feel very supported. One member of staff wrote, 'I enjoy working at the school and feel like there are opportunities for me to grow and improve.'

There are effective relationships with parents, carers and professionals. Parents feel confident to leave their children, knowing that they are safe and well cared for. Overall, feedback from parents is positive and they are very complimentary about the support that staff provide. A parent described communication as 'brilliant' and said that staff are 'amazing'. One parent described communication from the residential staff as 'excellent' and said, 'Residential staff treat him in a way that he feels like he is their equal so that he responds more positively to suggestions that they make.' Another parent commented, 'There's lots of progress, he's much more outgoing, he's quite talkative now and tells me about his day.'

The leadership team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has resulted in the residential provision meeting the points for improvement made at the last inspection. In addition, the school benefits from oversight and scrutiny by the governing body.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Point for improvement

- Ensure that all children and staff are given the opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by, where possible within 24 hours. Discussions should consider the age of the child, their capacity and cognitive ability and communication needs, and the circumstances of the restraint.

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: SC040063

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Joanna Burdon

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Michelle Bacon, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Sarah Billett, Social Care Inspector

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