

# Elemore Hall School

Elemore Hall School, Littletown, Durham DH6 1QD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Elemore Hall School is a maintained residential special school for pupils who may experience social, emotional or mental health difficulties. The school operates across three sites, following an expansion in September 2021. There are two sites for children aged 11 to 16, both of which have a residential provision. The expansion also involved a third site, which offers an alternative educational provision.

There is one headteacher across all three sites, who is supported by his senior leadership team. There are 167 pupils on roll at the two sites with residential provision. Accommodation is provided for up to 25 boys at the Elemore Hall site and for up to 20 girls and boys at the Windlestone site. The school provides flexible stays for pupils, from one to four nights per week, depending on their needs.

Accommodation is provided in single rooms in or close to the main school buildings. Both sites have large outdoor spaces which can be used for activities such as playing sport and bushcraft skills. One site has a farm which children access.

Each site has a head of care and both individuals have suitable skills and experience for their role. One has a relevant leadership qualification and the other is working towards this qualification.

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

### Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2023

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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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:** 6 December 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The children enjoy their stay in residency. During their time here, the children have fun, and this motivates them to learn. The children and the staff know each other very well. One child said, 'The people here are like my second family.' It is because of these strong relationships that staff can plan the children's care around their individual needs. As a result, the children make good progress in all areas of their development.

Children benefit from well-organised transitions into residency. There is a clear plan in place so that children ease gradually into the setting. This planning helps children to feel welcome and settle quickly. When children move on, the staff do as much as they can to support them. They take the children for visits to new places and facilitate staff from new settings coming to meet the children.

Children have access to a wide range of facilities on the school grounds. These include a farm, a multi-sports pitch, extensive grounds and a park with a climbing area. This helps to promote children's learning and enjoyment and supports them to socialise and stay active. The children have also designed a new room, the Elemore room, which has a pool table, gaming area and space for children to relax with their friends.

The children enjoy a wide range of activities away from the school. The activities support them to develop their social skills and confidence when away from the school. These activities broaden children's life experiences and provide them with a range of new opportunities. Trips they enjoy include gorge walking, geocaching and magnet fishing. One parent commented, 'My child is doing all sorts. They are experiencing things that they have never done in their life and learning so much about themselves and others.'

Children learn the importance of being kind, accepting differences and helping others. They take part in activities to help to raise funds for charities. One child has recently completed a half marathon with the support of staff to raise money for mental health awareness. Other children take part in coffee mornings to raise money for cancer research.

The children's confidence improves as they become more independent. They learn a range of life skills, including cooking, using public transport and shopping. The children have their own independence plans which help them to focus on personalised targets.

The children benefit from a seamless way of working across the school and residency. This consistent approach helps to reduce children's anxieties. It provides a predictable environment where they can learn. The 24-hour curriculum ensures that staff continually promote learning opportunities. For example, there is a current focus

on developing children's reading skills, which children practise in both settings in different ways. This way of learning ensures that the skills children learn are continually reinforced.

Children learn the importance of staying healthy. The school nurse provides children with any support that they need. The nurse visits children on a weekly basis to discuss any concerns that they may have. For example, she supports children's emotional well-being and offers them advice on positive relationships and around the dangers of smoking.

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

The children learn how to stay safe. They learn about a range of topics, which are delivered at a level they understand. Some children learn in one-to-one sessions. Others learn together in planned residential events, such as 'e-safety night'. Other topics that children cover include the risks of criminal activity and bullying.

The use of physical restraint is rare. Staff use their excellent relationships with the children to support them when they are upset and use verbal de-escalation and positive reassurance to help children to manage their own behaviour and frustrations. Physical restraint is only used as a last resort to keep the child or others safe from harm. It is used at the lowest level and for the shortest time.

When safeguarding issues arise, the headteacher and the designated safeguarding lead act quickly. They share information with relevant agencies, such as the police, specialist services and social care, to make sure that decisions are made jointly. The headteacher and designated safeguarding lead follow up on any actions. Representatives from the school attend all relevant safeguarding meetings. This means that they have the most up-to-date information to best support the children.

When needed, the children have individual risk assessments. These assessments are updated when significant incidents occur. These updates ensure that staff are aware of children's current risks and how to manage and reduce these to keep children and others safe.

The school has a clear recording system for monitoring the safety of the children. The staff are confident to use this system and they understand their duty to report any concerns about children's safety. The staff receive regular training which helps them to keep up to date with any changes in safeguarding practice. This training also helps them to identify potential risks to children, such as radicalisation.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

There are two heads of care, one on each site of this school. Both heads of care are very experienced. They confidently lead their staff teams by example. They have high standards and expectations and a clear focus on children enjoying their time in residency and achieving their goals and aims. The heads of care use effective

systems to monitor and record children's progress to make sure that they develop personal and social skills.

The residential governor has good oversight of the residential provision. She ensures that residency is a high priority and is a key part of the governors' meetings. Since the last inspection, to meet a recommendation, she has dedicated time to making sure that the governors understand the new national minimum standards for residential special schools. The residential governor provides challenge to senior leaders. The governor is currently carrying out a piece of work to monitor the progress of the residential service and how it is meeting the new national minimum standards.

Action is ongoing to meet a recommendation set at the last inspection around the independent visitor. One initial visit has been carried out by a visitor. However, only one brief report has been produced for one site. The report does not fully meet the required standard. Senior leaders fully recognise the importance of the independent visitor. Ongoing efforts to recruit a new visitor have now been successful and they are due to start in post soon.

The staff feel well supported by the heads of care and the headteacher. One staff member said, 'I feel really supported. I can knock on their door any time and ask anything.' Not all staff supervision is consistently recorded in line with the national minimum standards. Although managers and staff regularly talk about their work, the lack of recording is a missed opportunity to formally monitor, support and develop staff practice.

Leaders and managers work closely with other professionals to ensure that information is shared effectively. The other professionals they work with include the school nurse, local police teams, the local authority designated officer and social workers. The effective sharing of information makes sure that children receive the wider support they need.

Leaders and managers promote a culture of equality. The children are encouraged to learn about different values and beliefs. The children learn about different cultures and celebrations, including Chinese New Year. They also enjoy celebrating and learning about British events, such as the coronation of the King.

## **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 standard(s) for residential special schools:

- Leaders should ensure that the governing body, trustees or proprietor of the school appoint a representative who is independent of the leadership and management of the school to visit the residential provision six times, spread evenly, over the course of a school year and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 8, paragraph 3.1)
- Leaders should ensure that all staff have access to relevant support and advice for their role and receive at least termly supervision. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', page 32, paragraph 26.6)

### **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:** SC040508

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Richard Royle

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector (Lead)

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Rachel Ruth, Social Care Inspector

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