

Moor House School & College

Moor House School & College, Mill Lane, Oxted, Surrey RH8 9AQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Moor House School & College is a co-educational, non-maintained residential and day special school and a registered charity. It provides specialised schooling and therapy for children with speech and language difficulties. The school and college are leaders and specialists in developmental language disorder (DLD). At the time of inspection, there were 212 children on roll, including 53 residential children. There are 63 residential places that provide weekly boarding.

The headteacher has been in post since 2015. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 October 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: 11 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children speak greatly of the experiences and care they receive when staying at the school. They build long-lasting friendships that help them to develop a sense of personal identity and belonging.

Children feel valued and listened to by staff who care for them. Staff sensitively encourage the children to participate and share their thoughts and feelings in daily meetings and key-working sessions. This helps the children with their target objectives and future planning needs.

Children enjoy a wide range of social leisure opportunities, in and away from the school. Staff plan children's evening routines around their likes and interests and support them in completing daily homework needs. Children say they value this structure and support.

Children understand their goals and targets and the steps needed to help them achieve these. There is a good multi-agency approach across the school that sets, tracks, and reviews outcomes for children. This is helping the children to achieve at a pace that is well suited to their needs and abilities.

The speech and language team works in collaboration with the residential care staff and has established effective communication between home and school staff. There are weekly meetings to discuss children's progress and targets and a joint effort to look at how these targets can be met. Additionally, support can be personalised to help the children manage shared living and relationships. The speech and language team has worked alongside the residential staff to establish boundaries in relationships and communication for some children to support relationships to flourish.

Parents' feedback is unanimous in the support their children receive from staff to help them succeed and achieve. One parent shared, 'Our son regards both his residential friends and staff as extended family, showcasing the deep bonds and supportive environment the residential team harbours.'

There is a dedicated healthcare team to support the children. This includes all aspects of health, well-being, medication and first aid. The healthcare lead has established effective systems to monitor and advocate for children's health. This includes attending meetings for children with other health professionals, liaising and working collaboratively with parents and ensuring that children's day-to-day health needs are met. However, a small number of children's medication is not administered according to the prescribers' directions. Leader's took action to rectify this during the inspection.

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

Children say they feel safe and speak fondly of their relationships with key workers and other familiar staff. Children confidently explain how to raise concerns and complaints with staff. This means children have trusting and reliable relationships with those who care for them.

Staff are proactive in implementing boundaries for the children and encouraging positive behaviour. When consequences are used, these reflect the behaviour of the child. For example, where a child may have broken the rules around using their mobile phone, the phone may be taken away from them for a short period. This is followed up with a discussion with the child to explore the context.

Leaders are quick to report safeguarding concerns to external safeguarding professionals. All staff attend safeguarding training as part of their induction and have been informed of the updates in Keeping Children Safe in Education to ensure good safeguarding practice.

Staff promote children's independence, such as being able to safely manage their own medicines where possible. This is risk assessed by staff and frequent checks are carried out to ensure that this is being done safely.

Regular health and safety checks are undertaken and there is a maintenance team available daily. All health and safety checks have been carried out and remedial works are planned during half-term breaks to help reduce the impact on the children.

Staff inform the children how to evacuate from the building should a fire occur. However, regular fire evacuations have not been carried out termly during residential hours. Furthermore, leaders have not demonstrated how staff support the children to evacuate during nocturnal hours. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that current procedures, and the children's understanding of these procedures, are effective.

Staff conduct room searches when it is evident there may be a risk presented to children. However, records do not always demonstrate consent from the child or their views. Without this in place, there is a potential for children to feel that their belongings and privacy are not respected by staff. This is also an area that has been recognised for development by the independent visitor.

Safer recruitment checks do not include when staff left their education setting. This means, within the application process, gaps in staff employment history are not fully known. Action was taken during the inspection by senior leaders to rectify this and changes were made to internal processes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care is passionate about the children in the school and knows them individually. Her ambitious development plan clearly sets out her high expectations and standards of care for the children. This is having good outcomes for children such as wider connections in the local community, recognition awards and additional after-school clubs for the children.

There is a clear thread of monitoring across the school that demonstrates effective oversight of the residential provision. The safeguarding governor is visible to children and understands the needs of the service extremely well. Her reports are reflective and utilised well by leaders to help inform change.

There is a new training pathway being rolled out across the staff team. This is alongside opportunities for ad hoc training and development to progress. Staff receive a well-planned induction and regular mandatory training and updates.

Most staff say they feel well supported by senior managers. Staff informed inspectors that they receive regular supervision and feel professionally and personally supported by line managers. However, a small number of staff feel unable to share their concerns and feel a lack of support from managers. This was shared verbally with leaders during the inspection with a plan for leaders to address this.

Appropriate action has been taken by senior leaders to report and investigate any safeguarding concerns. However, in one incident following a substantiated safeguarding concern, no recorded reparation work was carried out with children. This is a missed opportunity for adults to reflect on staff practice and staff accountability with children.

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 for residential special schools:

- 15.3 In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'residential time', and at least one per year should be carried out overnight unless the school has assessed that this would be detrimental to children's welfare.

Recommendations

- Staff to use children's medication as directed by the prescriber.
- When staff carry out room searches, the consent and views of the child should be sought and recorded.
- Reparation work and children's views should be carried out and recorded following incidents of staff poor practice.

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: SC013926

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Helen Middleton

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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