

Walworth School

Walworth School, Bluebell Way, Newton Ayeccliffe, County Durham DL5 7LP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained special school for boys and girls. It provides primary education and residential care for children up to the age of 11. The children have social, emotional and mental health needs. Many of the children have additional needs, including autistic spectrum disorder and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.

There are 78 children on the school roll. The school offers up to 30 residential places on a flexible boarding basis. There are currently 14 children who access the residential provision per week in two groups.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2021, and the head of care has been in post since October 2022.

The inspectors for this part of the aligned inspection only inspected the social care provision at the school.

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 September 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: 18 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy attending the residential provision. Staff make sure that the children have fun and feel cared for in a nurturing and homely environment. Children have limited time on their games consoles so that they can spend more time with other children and staff playing games and having fun. Staff ensure that the children's bedtime routines are calm and relaxing by reading bedtime stories. This helps the children to feel settled before they go to bed, which helps them to sleep. Family members said that they see positive changes in their children, and this is due to the support and guidance that their children receive from the staff.

Staff provide the children with various activities such as group reading, and they take part in art, physical and music activities. These sessions provide the children with learning opportunities that promote their academic outcomes, as well as their social and motor skills. This enriched learning means that the children receive a 24-hour curriculum during their stays in residence.

Any incidents or concerns are followed up with discussions between the child and staff. These sessions are carefully planned to encourage the children to reflect on any issues of concern, without leaving them feeling that they are to blame. This helps the children to become more self-aware and helps them to link their feelings to their emotions.

Children respond well to the structured routine provided by the staff. Children's daily routines include making their bed and getting themselves dressed. This helps to develop the children's independence skills. Staff are calm and nurturing with the children. This reduces the children's anxieties, and helps them to enjoy their time during their stays.

Children learn that their views matter and that they have a right to be understood and to influence their world. The children use a variety of ways to express their views and wishes about staying in the residence. Staff respond to the children's views. For example, following consultation with the children, new, comfortable cushions for the residence have been provided. Healthy meal requests are given to the cook, who then makes them for the children.

The children's living space is homely and well decorated. Children personalise their bedrooms, which gives them ownership and a sense of belonging. Children's bathrooms have recently been fitted with new showers. However, the refurbishment has not extended to the children's bathtubs, which remain unsightly.

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

Staff know the children's risks well. Children's risk assessments are reviewed on a regular basis and are updated following any incidents. This helps staff to identify

trends and patterns in behaviour and to determine if the children's risks are increasing or reducing in frequency.

The designated safeguarding lead responds effectively to any safeguarding concerns. This promotes a positive culture throughout the school and in the residence. Regular meetings between the senior leadership team ensure that everyone is kept up to date on current safeguarding issues. This means that the necessary action is taken to keep the children safe both in school and at home.

The school has a clear recording system for monitoring any safeguarding concerns. New systems in place help the leaders and managers to track any patterns in the children's behaviour and help the staff to identify any possible triggers of unwanted behaviours. Staff are confident in using this system and they understand their duty to keep children safe. The staff receive regular training that helps them identify potential risks to children. The training includes internet safety, Prevent duty training and recognising the different forms of abuse. Staff said that they benefit from this training that helps them fulfil their roles effectively.

Staff rarely use physical interventions in the residential provision and they are only ever used as a last resort. When a response by staff is required, they act safely and effectively, and children are prevented from harming themselves or others. However, staff are not spoken with in person following an incident. Rather, any incidents are discussed in team meetings. This does not provide the staff with an individual opportunity to discuss any specific issues or concerns that they may have following a physical intervention.

Some fire doors in the residence were not fit for purpose and one child's bedroom door was difficult to open and close. This was quickly responded to and rectified by the senior managers during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a culture where there are high aspirations for children and the staff. The head of care has joined since the last inspection. She knows the children well and she has formed positive relationships with them. She has a hands-on approach and leads by example. This way of working ensures that the staff are consistent in their practice and encourages the nurturing ethos that prevails throughout the school and residence.

Staff say that they are fully supported by the head of care. They feel able to speak to her about any issues, including personal matters. Staff recognise the positive changes the head of care has already embedded in the residence and explained how the children's transitions are much smoother, both in and out of school. Staff hold the head of care in high regard and they perform consistently well as a team.

Ongoing learning for the staff means that the children receive a good level of care. The head of care has embedded a culture of continual professional development for the staff. Training is relevant and responsive when it needs to be. Recently, staff

completed additional training so they can meet a child's needs. Important training is revisited in team meetings, and 'bite-size' training sessions are provided to ensure that important messages are embedded.

Staff receive half-termly formal supervision sessions with the head of care. These focus on staff development, reflective practice and provide the staff with a steer and guidance in their roles. Children's progress is discussed to ensure that the care that they receive is consistent and of a high standard. This means that a holistic and child-centered approach is delivered by the staff.

The residential school governor conducts regular visits to the residence to ensure that the service delivers good-quality care to the children. Governors understand the importance of residence for the children and their families. They regularly review the strategic plan that helps them to identify strengths as well as areas for development. They challenge and support school leaders. This means that the children continue to receive the care that meets their needs.

The independent visitor is experienced and has a good understanding of their role. The independent visitor is thorough in their visits, speaks to children and staff and reviews a wide range of documentation. This means they can effectively comment on the quality of care provided to children. Recommendations and actions raised following a visit support the head of care to continue to meet the needs of the children, as well as enhance the overall development of the residential provision.

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

Points for improvement

- The registered person should ensure that all staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) any incidents of restraint that they have been involved in, witnessed, or been affected by, where possible within 24 hours. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 20.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the accommodation and facilities provided are maintained to a standard to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children, and they are provided with a safe environment in which they can live and learn. In particular, they should ensure that all the children's bath tubs in the residential setting are of a good quality and that fire doors are fit for purpose. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 14.2)

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: SC040510

Headteacher: Roland Cooke

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

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