

Cedar House School

Cedar House School, Bentham, Lancaster LA2 7DD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Cedar House School is an independent specialist day and residential school. The school meets the needs of a diverse group of children, who have a range of complex needs, including social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

There are 82 children on the school roll, aged between seven and 18 years. There is capacity for 18 children to receive residential stays at the school. Currently, seven children stay in two residential houses on the school site. Children's stays can last for one week, two weeks or a half term, depending on their circumstances.

The school is set in a rural location on the North Yorkshire and Lancashire border.

The head of residential has lead responsibility for care and has been in post since October 2022. She has a level 3 qualification in caring for children and young people.

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

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 27 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children live in fun and vibrant residential houses where they have developed positive and trusting relationships with the staff team. Highly effective staff help children to feel comfortable and safe, and to develop a sense of belonging. The foundation this has created is helping children to make exceptional progress. One social worker said, 'They provide excellent care; it's a real home away from home.'

The quality of support for the children's emotional well-being results in sustained improvement in the lives of children. The school's multi-disciplinary therapy team works hand-in-hand with education and care staff to create a stable environment for children to receive the help they need. The therapy team's seamless approach reassures the children and gives them confidence in the adults who care for them.

Children develop better coping strategies to manage their emotions. As a result, children are happier, more confident, and for some there is a lasting positive impact on their home life.

There are significant improvements in the children's education because of the integrated approach to learning. Every staff member and professional in the school has a detailed insight about the children's needs. The integrated school and residential community developed by school leaders help children to make significant progress with their attendance, their ability to focus, friendships, and happiness in school.

Children are being equipped for their future by developing independence skills individual to their needs. The incremental approach to learning helps them to progress at their own pace as they develop trust and confidence in themselves. Staff use every opportunity to help children to develop through reflective conversations.

Children learn to travel independently, develop excellent time keeping skills, personal care, and hygiene routines, and to look for part-time work. For some children, this is exceptional progress, taking into account their starting point.

The wide variety of activities the children enjoy provides them with wonderful experiences and lasting positive memories. Staff focus on ensuring that the children have fun and shared experiences that enrich their friendships. Staff create a family-style environment in which difference is accepted and the children's relationships flourish.

Charity work, volunteering and activities in the local area to the school help children to feel integrated as part of their local community. Staff are creative in opening doors for children to engage with people who they have not had opportunity to do so before. This means children are helped to develop their social skills in unfamiliar

surroundings. The plethora of different experiences facilitated by staff helps children to develop their self-esteem and confidence to try new things. Through their charity work, children develop their empathy and a sense of personal reward from having the opportunity of being able to help others.

Transition plans are effective in quickly helping new children start to forge their relationships with the staff and the children already in residence. Children send letters to help with their introductions. These early connections reduce the anxieties associated with forming new relationships. For those children who leave, some move on to further education and schools closer to their family home. Their time in residence is celebrated through parties and wonderful memory books. This helps children to feel valued as they take the next step on their journey.

There is a standard approach to having bedroom door alarms turned on at night-time. This is not necessary for all children and detracts from the homely environment staff have been so effective in creating.

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

The children receive consistently high-quality care in a safe and secure environment. Staff are nurturing in their approach to care, and their presence in residence reassures the children. The exceptionally strong safeguarding culture extends to the children, who speak out when they are concerned for one another. This helps children to feel safe when they are in the residential provision.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and senior leadership team have demonstrated exemplary safeguarding practice. For example, the DSL escalated their concerns after delayed responses from other professionals meant that the level of risk to several children was unknown following a serious incident which evolved when children were at home during the summer holidays. The practice and the willingness of the DSL to collaborate with other professionals are helping to ensure that due diligence is considered by these safeguarding agencies.

Missing from care incidents are not a concern. On the one occasion it has occurred, staff followed the child's missing-from-care protocol to help the child to safely return to residence.

Staff curiously explore the antecedents to incidents to have a broader understanding of the children's needs. The team's safeguarding practice is enhanced because incidents are not considered in isolation. This enables staff to have an excellent understanding of the risks associated with each child.

The children's voice is central to the school's anti-bullying movement. Children who are anti-bullying ambassadors bring to life the impact that bullying can have, through the forum of regular meetings that are facilitated by staff. Staff broaden the children's knowledge by exploring the different dynamics of bullying and its impact

on other people. Positive re-enforcement for children to be part of the anti-bullying team has helped to embed a culture where bullying behaviours are not accepted as part of the children's day-to-day lives.

Holds are rarely needed because staff are highly effective in helping children to cope when experiencing difficult emotions. The analysis from the head of care and the headteacher shows their understanding of the mitigating factors that contribute to the children's distress. This promotes empathetic practice. Staff and the children are supported to reflect, learn and recover after behavioural incidents occur. This is demonstrated through a simple but effective post-incident learning exercise.

A thirst for learning in the senior leadership team ensures that safeguarding practice keeps evolving as the associated risks of caring for vulnerable children continue to change. Staff's safeguarding practice is constantly tested through random questioning exercises, which use different safeguarding scenarios. This excellent approach to learning helps to prevent complacency in the staff's safeguarding practices.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The members of the residential leadership team are highly motivated and committed to ensuring that children have the best experiences and opportunities while living at the residential provision. Their desire to make a difference to the children's lives is threaded throughout the staff team. The galvanised team maintains a highly aspirational culture that drives forward the progress the children make.

The high expectations of the practices demonstrated by staff are maintained through a comprehensive learning package supported by the in-house therapy team. Staff highly value the guidance and support from skilful and enthusiastic leaders. A shared sense of accountability promoted in the team helps its members to be innovative and creative when developing ideas to sustain excellent care for the children.

The synergy between the head of care and the headteacher promotes a strong interface between school staff and the residential team. The seamless transitions from residence into school allows children to experience consistency throughout their day and into the evening. This is helping children to make excellent progress socially and academically.

Excellent monitoring systems support leaders in knowing their strengths and areas in need of development in the residential provision. Leaders review all incidents to ensure that they can take learning wherever possible. Leaders empower children to have a voice in the school and consult with professionals and family members and act without delay, so their service continues to be responsive to the needs of the children. This demonstrates an embedded culture of learning.

Residential leaders are fierce advocates for children. When care planning arrangements are not in the best interest of the children, the leaders share their concern loudly to help ensure that the children's welfare needs are not overlooked.

Members of the school board provide effective scrutiny of the care and education of children. Appropriate challenge to leaders enriches the school's assessment of the residence.

Development of the residential provision is high on the agenda at board meetings. There are ongoing investments into the quality of the accommodation and the staffing and resources of the therapy team. This will continue to enhance the quality of care afforded to children.

Information for children who are looked after by their local authority is not always available to the leaders of the residential provision. This means the level of delegated responsibility is not fully understood by leaders. However, there has been no impact for children to date.

Leaders do not have a system that demonstrates how staff who do not have the relevant minimum qualification hold the same level of competencies attained through gaining the relevant or equivalent qualification.

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

Point for improvement

- The school should have obtained all necessary information about a child's health, education and care needs, prior attainment, and achievements prior to (or in an emergency, at the time of or as soon as practicable after) admission. In particular, the school should agree with the child's local authority the level of delegated authority they hold while the children are in their care. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 6.2)
- Good-quality sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and responsive to children's needs and is managed with ongoing assessments of risk. In particular, door alarms should only be used when it is assessed as necessary to keep individual children safe. The assessment of risk should be clearly recorded in the children's risk assessment. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 9.1)
- All existing care staff, including night staff, have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged following the commencement of the 2015 standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within three months of confirmation of employment and complete the qualification within two years. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 26.2)

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: SC040058

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Stephen Salt

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 015242 61149

Email address: cedar-house@witherslackgroup.co.uk

Inspectors

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Steve Guirey, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023