

# Langham Oaks

School Road, Langham, Colchester, Essex CO4 5PA

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Langham Oaks is a residential special school with academy status, located in a rural village near Colchester.

There are 71 students at the school, of whom 20 board. The school can accommodate 28 students in the residential provision for between one and four nights per week. The school caters for students with social, emotional and mental health needs.

The residential manager has been in post since January 2022. He has the necessary experience and qualification for the role.

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

### Inspection dates: 14 to 16 November 2023

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of previous inspection:** 9 May 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Children enjoy staying in residence. Staff build positive relationships with children and help them to have new experiences. However, several shortfalls in relation to how well children are helped and protected, the leadership and management of the provision and planning for children's stays have affected the overall experiences and progress that children make.

Children's placement plans are of poor quality. They contain very limited background information about children and their previous experiences. Some staff had limited knowledge in relation to this. Plans contain some targets, but these are quite generic and not tailored to children's individual needs. Plans do not include an overview of children's progress in education or reflect information in their education, health and care plans. This means they do not provide a clear overview of how staff help children in different areas of their lives.

Children who board have increased school attendance. However, the links between staff in residence and staff in education are limited. There are not regular reviews between staff in order to consider children's progress or areas in which children need additional support. Such reviews have previously taken place but have not done so for some time. There are some systems in place for communication between education and residence staff. However, staff in residence stated that they are not always promptly informed of significant incidents for children. These issues limit how effectively education and residence work together to help children make progress.

Managers have introduced questionnaires to help gain children's views. Children have engaged well in these, and managers have responded to their views. However, children's meetings are not recorded, meaning that it is not clear what children have spoken about in them or how managers have responded to this. It is also unclear how often these meetings have taken place.

Children know how to make a complaint. On the rare occasions they have done so, managers have taken appropriate actions in response. Children said they were happy with how complaints had been resolved.

Staff provide a wide variety of activities and experiences for children. One staff member is a qualified activity leader. This has enabled children to be provided with experiences such as kayaking and paddle boarding, which they have not previously done. Recently, staff took several children to a Premier League football match. This was again a new experience for them and one which they thoroughly enjoyed.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

There have been several incidents of concern for one child. There has been good communication with the child's parent and a referral to external professionals has been made. However, while these incidents have not taken place in residence, the child's risk assessment does not provide a clear overview of the risks or strategies to manage them. One staff member was not aware of some significant risks in this area. In addition, on some occasions when incidents have taken place outside of school during the child's home life, staff have not followed this up with the child to try to understand potential triggers. This also misses opportunities to provide the child with additional support.

There have been several safeguarding concerns which have been raised with the Local Authority Designated Officer. The majority of these have been responded to well, with effective communication with other professionals to ensure that concerns are fully understood and appropriately responded to. On one occasion, when correct processes were not followed, leaders and managers ensured that a thorough review took place. This included commissioning an independent review of safeguarding practice at the school, demonstrating a determination to learn from any such shortfall. On another occasion, when a concern was raised by police, managers took steps to mitigate potential risks including contacting several professionals. However, they did not follow up sufficiently with the local authority to consider the potential of similar risks occurring again in the future.

Staff speak confidently of managing any behavioural incidents. However, records of incidents are of poor quality, with them not detailing how staff have responded to children. In addition, there is no management oversight recorded on incidents, so it is not clear if they are reviewed by leaders and managers. This limits leaders and managers ability to consider how well staff manage incidents and identify any learning.

Staff understand how to raise concerns and have done so appropriately when they have had them. When staff have raised some concerns, managers have responded well to this. Thorough reviews have taken place and actions for learning have been identified and completed.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of the residential provision. They have failed to ensure that children's plans are of good quality, that staff are provided with clear strategies to manage risks and that there is oversight of behavioural incidents. While they have identified some shortfalls and there are plans in place to make improvements, these have not yet been effective. Shortfalls relating to the quality of placement plans and risk assessments and how children's views are recorded were raised following the last inspection, but improvements have not been

made. Therefore, leaders and managers have failed to ensure improvement in the residential provision in response to previously identified issues.

There is a good-quality programme of induction in place for new staff. This ensures that staff receive the information and knowledge they need when they start their roles. Ongoing training is then provided to staff. However, records of this are not always clear, making it difficult to monitor exactly which staff have completed which courses. In addition, only two staff have completed de-escalation and physical intervention training. While there have not been any incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection, this fails to ensure that staff are equipped with all the skills they may need.

Staff feel well supported. They said that leaders and managers are available to them and are supportive when they have any challenges in their roles. Staff received regular supervision, which includes a good level of discussion about children's needs and how these are being met. Staff are also provided with annual appraisals which recognise their strengths as well as identifying areas for development in their practice.

Team meetings include detailed discussion about how staff work with children as well as consideration of any safeguarding concerns and how these are being managed.

Staff build positive relationships with children's parents and carers. Families said that communication is good and that staff build positive and meaningful relationships 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 standards for residential special schools:

■ The school should ensure that:

arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school;

and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

In particular, the school's leadership and management should ensure that children are helped to understand and reduce risks, that there are clear strategies identified to manage risks to children and that all safeguarding concerns are appropriately explored and shared as needed. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.1)

■ The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met. In particular, the school's leadership and management should ensure effective monitoring of children's placement plans, risk assessments and behavioural incident reports, and that records are kept of children's views and how these are responded to. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.4)

■ There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school. Leaders ensure that there is a mutually supportive and reinforcing approach, between (i) the educational provision and (ii) the residential provision, which is centred around the child. Individuals working in each aspect of provision should be able to challenge each other where necessary. The school should have processes in place to ensure this is the case. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.5)

■ There is a written plan in place for each child resident in the school setting out how their day-to-day needs will be met, known as the placement plan. The plan is thorough and specific to the child and is agreed, as far as is practicable, with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child. Children have an opportunity to contribute to their plans. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet, assesses any risk and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan, there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the EHC plan and reflects any changes to the EHC plan. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 7.1)

- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children resident in the school. Staff are well trained and up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and the policies and legal obligations of the school. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 26.1)

## **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:** 1213822

**Headteacher:** Mr Alan Wells

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01206 271571

**Email address:** alan.wells@langhamoaks.co.uk

## **Inspectors**

Joe Matkar-Cox, Social Care Inspector (lead)  
Dorothy Thompstone, 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023