

Woodeaton Manor School

Woodeaton Manor School, Woodeaton, Oxford OX3 9TS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Woodeaton Manor School is a special day and residential school for 84 day pupils, although 92 are currently on roll. The majority of children have a diagnosis of autism. There are 10 residential places, which are available for four days a week during term time. The residential provision is not currently being used and children have not stayed overnight since July 2023.

The headteacher has been away from the school since July 2023. The deputy headteacher took on the acting headteacher role until the half-term break in the autumn term. A consultant principal was appointed by the governing body and has been in post since 30 October 2023.

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

Inspection dates: 30 October to 1 November 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Some children who previously accessed the residential provision stay on after school for additional activities. The residential staff have been redeployed to support pupils during the school day.

Children are not helped to make good progress in the residential provision. Care and support plans are vague and do not identify how staff should support children. For example, a child whose target was to change their bedding had not achieved this, yet there was no coherent plan or strategy identified to help them to do so.

There are insufficient resources to meet children's therapeutic needs. It is not clear how children access the specialist services that they require. There is no process to assess the effectiveness of the interventions.

The arrangements for the storage of medication are unsuitable and place children at risk of harm. For example, medication was not locked away in a suitable storage area.

Children are positive about the residential staff and said how much they liked being with them. Children have genuine affection for the head of care and deputy head of care and are comfortable in their presence. Children told inspectors how much they enjoyed the places that they had visited and activities that they had engaged in.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are weak and inconsistent. The arrangements to ensure that children are safely supervised and supported are ineffective. Children wander the school grounds unsupervised. Inspectors encountered potential incidents of bullying and 'play fighting' among children who were unsupervised. Children have left the site unnoticed on several occasions, as the site is not secure.

Some positive changes in safeguarding practices have been met with resistance from some staff. There appears to be a culture of acceptance across the provision of insular practice and what is described as the 'Woodeaton way'.

Responses to unwanted behaviour lack insight into the children's level of understanding and the way that they experience the world around them. For example, a common consequence was to exclude children from attending the residential provision. This is not an effective or appropriate way of helping children to learn positive behaviours.

Children are at risk online, as there is no clear direction or guidance for staff on how they should safeguard children when they are online in the residential provision. Filters to restrict content to age-appropriate materials have not been used.

Sleeping arrangements for children are unsuitable. For example, the children's toilet for one bedroom is in another cottage, which means that children must walk a long distance to access it. This makes it hard for staff to monitor their whereabouts and safety. A toilet near this bedroom is designated for staff use only. There are no safeguards in place to prevent unauthorised people from accessing the residential area at night and children know how to override the door alarms. Children have also been found in each other's bedrooms, without staff being aware.

Children are not protected from avoidable risks around the site. There is no clear oversight of the safety of the premises, and several areas are dangerous or in a poor state of repair. For example, outside steps are broken, and there is a lack of exterior lighting, a broken window and interior walls that are very wet with damp. Decor and maintenance are poor throughout the residential provision. There is no clear schedule of maintenance works to improve this situation. Staff say there are delays in responses to requests for maintenance. This places children at risk of illness, accident or injury.

The current designated safeguarding lead is aware that significant improvements are required and has been developing the online reporting system to make it easier to use and follow up on concerns. More recently, appropriate action has been taken and concerns are being referred to the local authority designated officer. Senior staff are now providing effective challenge to partner agencies to ensure concerns are acted on.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Governance in the school is ineffective. The governing body has not acted to safeguard against insular practice which has led to a closed culture. Nor have they addressed the current serious safeguarding concerns identified at this inspection.

The leadership team has failed to create a healthy safeguarding culture. This has led to serious and widespread concerns about children's safety. Some leaders have now recognised serious gaps in how children are being cared for and have begun to implement changes. However, this work has been met with resistance by some members of staff.

In the headteacher's absence, the acting headteacher identified many shortfalls and concerns across the school and residential provision. A consultant principal has recently been appointed to assist leaders to implement an improvement plan.

Leaders and managers do not have good systems in place to monitor and review the residential setting or the impact that staff have on improving the outcomes and

experiences of individual children. There is no clarity as to how children have been previously assessed to attend the residential provision.

Staff do not have regular supervision. For example, the last recorded supervision session for the head of care was in October 2022. Supervision records do not indicate that safeguarding issues are routinely discussed. Training for staff is basic and there is a lack of specialist training in relation to children's individual needs.

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's governing body, trustees and/or proprietor monitor the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the residential and welfare provision in the school, and take appropriate action where necessary. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.1)
- The school's leadership and management, including governors, trustees and proprietors, demonstrate effective skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and actively promote the safeguarding and welfare of children. Staff with management responsibilities undertaken appropriate training in the management and practice of residential care. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.3)
- The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met. (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)
- Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child and parents/carers at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child/parent/carer), and to which personal statements or statements correcting errors can be added. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 5.1)
- 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 (which should be documented) and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Accommodation gives children appropriate privacy, taking into account sex, age and any individual needs. Where children share a bedroom, they are able to express a preference about who they share with. To minimise disruption the school should aim to avoid mixing accommodation arrangements for children on longer placements and those on short breaks. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 9.1)

- Sufficient toilet and washing facilities with good quality and necessary fixtures, fittings and adaptations, and access to hot water are provided for children, and are readily accessible from the sleeping accommodation. Toilet and washing facilities provide privacy for children, taking into account sex, age and any individual needs. Separate toilet facilities for boys and girls aged 8 years or over must be provided except where the toilet facility is provided in a room that can be secured from the inside and that is intended for use by one pupil at a time. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 9.3)
- Accommodation is well lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide accessible accommodation for any children with disabilities. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities and equipment to support the specific needs of children with disabilities. Any specialist equipment should be well maintained and safe, and staff should have appropriate training to operate it. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 9.4)
- Residential accommodation is reserved for the use of those children designated to use it and is protected from access by unauthorised persons. Any use of school facilities by individuals or groups does not allow members of the public (including members of organised groups using school facilities) unsupervised access to children, or to residential accommodation while occupied by children. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 9.7)
- The school has effective links with health agencies, including specialist services where appropriate, such as child and adolescent mental health services and sexual health services. The availability of such services is taken into account when considering admissions. Schools secure appropriate services for children when required. Children also have access to local medical, dental, optometric and other services or provision as necessary. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 12.4)
- All medication is safely and securely stored and accurate records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the children to whom they are prescribed. Staff are suitably trained to administer a child's medication as appropriate. Children allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. Where applicable, schools have regard to statutory guidance. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 12.8)
- 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. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.1)

- It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. The school's approach to online safety should be reflected in their child protection policy, having regard to the Department's Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.3)

- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured and they are provided a safe environment in which they can live and learn. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 14.2)

- The school has, and consistently implements, a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils. This policy includes:
 - the underlying objective to create a safe environment in which all pupils can learn and reach their full potential and to reflect the values and ethos of the school;
 - the role of designated staff in maintaining consistent behaviour expectations, including the responsibilities of school leaders, any resources allocated, and the involvement of governors or trustees;
 - the behaviour expected of pupils, including treating others with dignity, kindness and respect, and the measures to promote good behaviour, including positive reinforcement and reward and consequence systems;
 - how the needs of all pupils and staff are met so members of the school community feel safe knowing that bullying, physical threats or abuse are not tolerated, and that they belong;
 - pupil support, including the roles and responsibilities of designated staff and the support provided to pupils with additional needs where those needs might affect behaviour;
 - measures to prevent child-on-child abuse and the response to incidents of such abuse, including disciplinary action; how the school creates an environment in which children experience low stress;
 - staff understanding children's individual behaviours and how a child communicates, adapting their approach accordingly (for example, for some non-verbal children behavioural challenge can be a form of communication and therefore staff need to understand non-verbal cues);
 - when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and other physical contact and how this will be managed. Including how the policy, as required, complies with Reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention;
 - arrangements for searching and screening children and their possessions and how this relates to safeguarding policies. Any search of children's personal belongings should be carried out in accordance with section 550ZA of the

Education Act 1996 and with regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 20.1)

- The school ensures that all forms of bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory), at the school, are prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy. The strategy should include accessible and effective systems for children to report bullying. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 21.1)

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: SC013056

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Simon Bishop

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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