

# Wilds Lodge School

Stamford Road, Empingham, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Wilds Lodge School is an independent residential and day school for boys aged between seven and 18 years with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It currently provides boarding for approximately 43 children. The accommodation is situated across three sites. Two sites are situated a few miles from the main school site. The boarding accommodation is divided into five areas according to the pupils' age and vulnerability. Only four areas were occupied by children at the time of the inspection, and one area is temporarily closed.

### Inspection dates: 7 to 9 February 2024

**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:** 10 October 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children make progress in all areas of their development. Staff provide children with consistent care, with a stable core staff team that enables children to create positive memories and experiences. Staff have a nurturing approach and keep children at the centre of everything they do. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of children's individual needs. Children form trusted relationships with staff and benefit from good-quality care and support.

Children are encouraged by staff to participate in a variety of activities, both on site and within the community. Community-based activities after school mean that children meet others with shared interests. For example, some children attend cadets and others play football and attend running clubs. This develops children's confidence.

Staff help children to have high self-esteem and a positive body image. They are skilled at sensitively supporting children who are exploring their own sense of identity. Staff make sure that children do not feel judged or stigmatised.

The staff provide excellent support to help children make progress in education. Children that have faced previous barriers to education are supported to overcome these, improving their attendance in education, which in turn improves their educational outcomes.

Children benefit from individualised support that is responsive to their known and emerging needs. Well-thought-out routines that are designed to bring predictability are implemented in a way that enables children to have structure and stability so that they can participate in everyday life. Underpinned by the team's enabling attitude, this has resulted in children making good progress in many aspects of their lives.

Staff understand children's needs from when they first move to the home. Managers and staff celebrate the children's progress and achievements, no matter how small they might be. For example, children develop age-appropriate independence skills, making their beds and having personal hygiene routines and a healthy sleep routine. One child has developed their independence skills and confidence to enable them to travel home on their own, and others have been able to gain work experience and have part-time jobs. This is significant progress, providing children with increased responsibilities and new experiences, which in turn increases their self-esteem and confidence.

When older children leave this home, they are encouraged to follow their interests and goals. Children are focused on what careers they want to achieve, and staff encourage and support this enthusiasm. Good-quality multi-agency working with

partners from the careers service, school and college has meant that children's future aspirations are developed, and they are more likely to succeed.

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

Staff have a good understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities. Children are safer because there is a comprehensive risk management plan in place for each child. Staff have a good understanding of the actions they should take to keep children safe. Additionally, they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. This creates a culture where the children's safeguarding needs are central to everything that staff do.

Staff apply a therapeutic approach in their work with children. This ensures that staff have a good understanding of children's emotional needs and provides them with the required skills to effectively manage behaviours that challenge. In most instances, this approach works. Consequently, physical intervention is only used as a last resort, and the physical intervention reduction plan is effective.

Staff safely administer medication to children. All staff who dispense medication have received the appropriate training. There is clear management oversight, including daily and weekly audits. This ensures that children receive the medication prescribed to meet their health needs. When errors have occurred, these have been quickly identified due to the effectiveness of the auditing systems that are in place.

Children build trusting relationships with staff who work in a consistent way to ensure that children feel safe and secure. Staff nurture and support children, which allows them to flourish.

Children have mobile phones, and they have varied access to these depending on their age. Staff provide education to children on safe phone usage, and the home internet security system adds a further layer of assurance.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The management team is suitably qualified, experienced and child-focused. It is passionate and dedicated to supporting children to achieve good outcomes. A culture of high aspirations is embedded in staff practice. As a result, children are making good progress in this nurturing environment.

There have been some changes within the senior leadership team. To coincide with these changes, new policies and procedures have been introduced. The changes were initially viewed by staff as being negative, but over time, it has been acknowledged how the changes have improved the outcomes for children and staff.

Staff say that they enjoy working at the homes and that team morale is the best it has ever been. This in turn provides a happy and harmonious environment for

children. Staff are highly complimentary about the head of care and refer to him as 'an outstanding manager'.

There has been a level of enhanced working between the care and education staff that has sought to provide children with seamless care. Expertise has been shared between all caring for the children, and this has driven forward positive changes.

Staff have access to a comprehensive range of training, including bespoke training to meet children's individual needs. Staff receive regular supervision and access to weekly training sessions. They are supported to understand the children's individual needs and reflect on their practice. As a result, staff are attuned and skilled and understand their role.

Monitoring systems ensure that the manager has effective oversight of the quality of care provided by the home. The manager uses the bi-monthly independent visitor's reports to regularly assess the difference that the home is making to the children. As a result, leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of how to support children to make continued progress.

Collaboration with multiple agencies stands out as a notable strength within the home. Professionals have observed that the staff consistently go above and beyond for the children, creating an environment where the children genuinely feel cared for and valued.

## **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:** SC069231

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Toby Oakley

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

Lizette Watts, Social Care Inspector

Simon Hunter, Social Care Inspector

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