

Loxley Hall

Loxley Hall School, Stafford Road, UTTOXETER, Staffordshire ST14 8RS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Loxley Hall School is part of Manor Hall Academy Trust. The school offers day and residential places to boys aged 11 to 16 years with social, emotional and/or mental health needs. There are 103 pupils on roll, of whom 37 pupils access the residential provision and 30 pupils have overnight stays. The school is situated in a rural setting a few miles outside of the town of Uttoxeter. The main building is a large three-storey country house in which classrooms, offices, a main kitchen and a dining hall are situated. There are two residential houses on the school site, which can provide overnight stays for up to 10 boys at any one time.

The head of care oversees the residential provision and is suitably qualified and experienced.

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

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 March 2024

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

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

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: 7 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The school staff and the residential staff work as one team to ensure the best outcomes for children. They support children to overcome adversity, enabling children to successfully move onto further education, employment or training. For the last three years, 100% of children, who have accessed the residential provision, have successfully gone into employment or college. This is because staff competently support children with their mental and emotional health as well as developing their social and life skills.

Children thoroughly enjoy the residential experience. They say that the best thing about residence is the staff. Some also said the activities are their favourite thing, and getting away from their sisters! There are plenty of staff to enable children to choose the activities they want to do. Children are relaxed around staff and clearly have strong relationships with them. Children know the rules and say these are fair. One child said: 'As long as you ain't stupid, there are not a lot of rules.' A child was asked who his favourite staff are. He said: 'Technically everyone is.' He also said that he enjoys 'chillaxing' in residence.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities within the school, in the local and wider community. For example, children regularly go swimming, bowling and roller skating. Parents pay a nominal fee and the school fund the rest. This is also true of the annual camping holiday to a beach near Barmouth. This means that children can participate in these activities whether parents can afford them or not. Additionally, children have exposure to things they have not had previously such as camping or playing on a sandy beach. The experiences children have in the residential provision help to develop children's self-esteem, confidence, and resilience. Children's life chances improve significantly because of their participation in the activities within the residential provision.

The school specialise in the emotional and mental health of children. They have a range of strategies and research-based practice that they call upon. They signpost parents to other agencies appropriately. An educational psychologist said: 'Young people are respected, valued and given sensitive caregiving.'

The residential provision is open four nights a week but only three nights are overnight. Staff transport the children back to each child's home after the extended day provision on Thursday nights. This means that children who may not have been able to access the residential provision because of lack of transport home, can access it.

Children choose to be part of the residential experience. They move into residence in a planned way that is led by each individual child. Children often come into residence with their friends. The residential provision offers them the opportunity to spend time

with their friends, something they may not otherwise be able to do because of the distance they live from their friends. A parent said: 'He does not live close to anyone his own age or disability, so residential helps him to gain friendships and peers that are not his siblings or parents.' Staff recognise the importance of friendships because they provide these children with a wider network of people around them. In turn, this helps to protect children from adversity.

Children's views and wishes are important to staff. They are regularly consulted about the residential provision and what changes they would like to see. Children are listened to, and appropriate action is taken. For example, children recently requested metal detectors. These have been purchased and the children are excited about using them.

Children have made comments such as: 'We eat amazing food. When we get to all eat together it's like having a big family. Staff and students in residence don't let you down' and 'If I were to give compliments I would be talking for hours, it's that good in Resi.'

The houses are warm, homely and well maintained. There are plans to replace the flooring in entrances and the conservatory. All mattresses have been recently replaced and children say that the new mattresses are very comfortable. Children's artwork is displayed on the walls, and they are encouraged to express themselves through doodles on a doodle board and windows.

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

Safeguarding processes help to protect children. The head of care is the designated safeguarding lead and a member of the senior leadership team. Staff are competent in their knowledge about how to keep children safe. Safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately, and leaders and managers work closely with safeguarding agencies effectively. When families are in crisis, leaders and managers ensure that appropriate support is provided. This can include providing extra time in the residential provision, ensuring that children stay within their family or have somewhere to stay while appropriate accommodation is found.

Most children share bedrooms. This is carefully managed and regularly reviewed. However, the safeguarding policy has not considered the unique nature of the residential school. For example, it does not refer specifically to sharing bedrooms and the safeguards in place. Furthermore, risk assessments are not completed for all children who share a bedroom. Risk assessments are completed for children who do not share but these are not clear and do not always specify that, as part of the strategies for keeping children safe, they should not share a room. Leaders and managers acted on these concerns immediately. The risks for children are well known and children's sleeping arrangements are carefully considered.

The number of incidents is low in the residential provision. Incidents tend to be low level. Staff support children well when they are anxious or upset. Staff know the

children very well and understand their triggers and what helps to support their emotions. They do this successfully and without the use of physical intervention. However, records do not evidence the therapeutic approach that the school has adopted. Most records lack detail about how staff support children with their behaviour and records do not use language consistent with the school's approach.

The care of children is based on a warm and nurturing approach with clear rules and boundaries. Staff regularly praise children for their achievements, no matter how small. Sanctions are rarely given. However, the records for rewards and sanctions are repetitive and not all spaces are completed, for example, the effectiveness of the reward or sanction. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain the impact of the rewards or sanctions from the record.

Children consistently report that bullying is not an issue in residence.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are fully committed to ensuring that children have joyful experiences and make exceptional progress. They regularly use research-informed practice and disseminate creative practice to other schools. The head of care is qualified and experienced. Monitoring systems are established and support the school's improvement plan.

There is a highly skilled and qualified established team of residential staff. They have a diverse skillset. For example, staff have knowledge of bushcraft, fishing and cycle repairs. This means that children have access to a huge range of activities that they enjoy, led by an expert to ensure their safety.

The residential governor knows the school very well and gave some lovely examples of the children being kind and thoughtful towards her. She completes regular monitoring visits to the residential provision, ensuring that she spends time with children and staff. Children know her and are happy to chat to her. Her reports are submitted at least six times a year. She completes all the activities stated within national minimum standard 3 but she does not evaluate the quality of the provision and effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded.

The independent person, of which there are two, also visit the residential provision at least monthly. Children know these people well and are happy to chat to them. they also complete a report of their observations after each visit.

The school has strong links with external professionals including safeguarding agencies such as the police. A local police officer has sought the head teacher's expertise with children who have social, emotional and mental health needs. An education psychologist said: 'Staff have and continue to work with me exceptionally well.'

Parents are very complimentary about the residential service. They praise the staff and their commitment to their children. A parent said: 'They are absolutely amazing and if they weren't able to do what they do, [Child's name] wouldn't be the person he is today.'

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

Points for improvement

- Ensure that the safeguarding policy is specific to the unique nature of the residential school and includes safeguards for children who share bedrooms. (National minimum standard 13.4)
- Ensure that the strategies for reducing risk to children are clearly stated within the child's risk assessment. (National minimum standard 14.3)
- Complete a risk assessment for all children who share a bedroom to ensure that it is safe for them to do so. (National minimum standard 9.1)
- Review records of incidents and the rewards/sanctions book to ensure that they reflect practice, they are written using language that is helpful to the child, and that leaders and managers can use to monitor the conduct within the setting effectively. (National minimum standard 5)
- Ensure that reports completed under national minimum standard 3 comply wholly with this standard. (National minimum standard 3)

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: SC038729

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr David Bownds

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Inspector

Joanne Vyas, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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