

Millgate School

Millgate School, 18 Scott Street, Leicester LE2 6DW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This residential special school is based in Leicester and is part of Discovery Schools Academy Trust. The school provides education and residential provision for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, the school had 128 students on roll, of which 18 students were accessing the residential provision. A maximum of eight students can stay at any one time in residence.

The residential provision is overseen by the headteacher.

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

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 March 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: 6 December 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children's experiences are extremely positive. The residential provision includes several high-quality elements. The judgement of good takes the judgements for help and protection and leadership and management into account.

The relationships between staff and children are strong. Staff have high expectations and maintain consistent boundaries. Staff's interactions with children are filled with high levels of kindness, love and nurture. Children are hugely proud of their school and gave exceptionally positive feedback about how they enjoy spending time with staff and each other. The residential provision provides children with a stable base to learn and thrive.

Children who stay in residence significantly improve their academic engagement from their starting points. School leaders closely monitor children's educational outcomes and the benefits of residence towards children's overall progress. There is substantial evidence that children improve their educational attainment, social skills, independence and ability to manage and reflect on their emotions. Highly effective communication systems between residential staff and education staff ensure a unified approach to children's learning and achievement.

Children participate in an excellent range of varied activities that meet their interests. These include swimming, golfing, cycling and opportunities to attend exciting residential camps. A broad variety of sporting fixtures take place in residential time. Children's talents in art and theatre are extremely well supported. These experiences greatly improve children's self-esteem and well-being which adds significant value to their time at school.

Staff provide well-planned support for children to develop their life skills. Children have responsibility for tasks in the residential provision, such as cooking, recycling and cleaning. Staff encourage children to participate in creative budgeting weeks when they develop important skills in planning and managing finance. These help children to prepare for adulthood.

Staff have good oversight of children's health needs. Medication is appropriately stored and administered. Children and staff have access to a mental health first-aider. During their time in residence, children enjoy a balanced and varied range of healthy, freshly cooked food.

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

There is a good safeguarding culture in residence and the wider school. Children say that they feel safe. Staff have an in-depth understanding of children's needs and previous experiences. School leaders have provided comprehensive training to staff

in line with new statutory guidance. Staff are well informed to respond to risk indicators for children.

Staff work closely with the specialist behaviour support team to create personalised strategies for children. Staff are empathetic to children's past experiences and are highly skilled in de-escalation interventions when responding to children's emotions. Children have opportunities to engage with art therapies and one-to-one counselling. Consequently, children develop stronger emotional resilience and there are very few behavioural concerns in residence.

School leaders ensure they carefully balance children's interests and personalities when considering group dynamics. There are very positive friendships that form between children. On the one occasion when there was low-level conflict between children, this was well managed by the staff.

There has been one instance of physical restraint in residence since the last inspection. This was necessary and proportionate. Staff recorded this incident in detail and school leaders thoroughly monitored the intervention.

School leaders maintain appropriate health and safety arrangements in residence to ensure children's safety. This includes regular health and safety checks and fire drills. School leaders have recently commissioned an inspection on the fire doors throughout the school. The assessor has highlighted that several of the doors need replacing to be fit for purpose. School leaders have prioritised these works and a clear plan is in place to address this.

School leaders have not always taken appropriate action in response to safeguarding concerns. A referral to the local designated officer was not promptly made when allegations were made against staff. This means that external oversight and necessary protective measures were not in place when they should have been. Although, the concerns were suitably investigated, a failure to following procedures can reduce the safeguards for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

School leaders provide strong and confident leadership. They have a comprehensive understanding of children's needs. School leaders are well respected by children and staff. There is a constructive child-centred approach adopted by staff in residence. This successfully supports children in improving their future life chances.

School leaders and staff have adapted areas of research into the development of support provided to children. This has included implementing innovative strategies for children to improve the way they express themselves and reflect on their well-being. Children's views are continuously prioritised by staff and are central to the schools continuing development plan.

School leaders have ensured that children are involved in a variety of charitable schemes and volunteering opportunities. This has helped children to build their self-determination and strengthens their sense of community.

Staff are dedicated and provide positive role models for children. Staff receive good quality training that equips them with the skills to meet children's individual needs. Staff morale is high, and there are several long-standing staff who have worked in the provision for many years. This provides children with continuity of care.

School leaders ensure staff receive regular supervision sessions and an annual appraisal, when required. Weekly safeguarding briefings provide an effective forum to monitor proactive strategies to safeguard children. However, further improvement is necessary to ensure the records of these meetings capture the depth of discussions held. Currently, these meetings are not recorded in a way that assists school leaders to monitor staff and safeguarding practice over time.

External monitoring by the independent visitor provides a basic level of scrutiny and analysis. However, children, families and social workers views are not always gained or considered. This is a missed opportunity, as this feedback could make a useful contribution to practice developments.

Families and social workers are generally positive about the overall experiences of children and the quality of staff's support in residence. Communication is generally cited as being good. However, there have been instances where parents have raised concerns. On one of these occasions, assurances were not provided that all concerns raised by the parent were appropriately resolved. School leaders have not ensured that responses to these concerns have been managed in line with the school's complaints policy.

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 standard for residential special schools:

- The school has, and follows, an effective policy on recording and responding to parental complaints. (Residential special schools: National minimum standards 19.1)

Recommendations

- School leaders should ensure that liaison and/or a written referral to the local authority designated officer is completed in line with local authority procedures when allegations against staff are made.
- School leaders should ensure that external monitoring by the independent person consistently includes children, family and social worker consultations.
- School leaders should ensure that the recording systems for staff supervisions, annual appraisals and safeguarding briefings capture the depth of discussions held.

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: SC006452

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Sara Marsh

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Inspectors

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector
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