

Ash Field Academy

Ash Field School, Broad Avenue, Leicester LE5 4PY

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is an academy school in Leicester with 168 pupils. The residential provision is in a dedicated area in the main school and caters for up to 18 children at any one time. Children staying in the residential provision are aged eight to 19. Children have physical disabilities and/or complex health conditions, as well as associated communication, sensory and learning needs. Children usually access the residential service for one or two nights a week.

The head of residential provision is experienced and qualified and has been in post for a number of years.

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

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 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 **outstanding**

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 last inspection: 17 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children are provided with exceptional child-centred care from dedicated, caring and nurturing staff. Staff understand the barriers that exist in society for disabled children and they work hard to break down those barriers and keep them down.

The physical environment is appropriate for children with differing needs. The school is wheelchair-friendly and children can easily manoeuvre around all areas. Outside school hours, the whole school space is used to engage children in a wide range of fun activities. Children get the opportunity to do activities that are not generally accessible in the community and are able to do these with their friends.

Transitions to having overnight stays are very well coordinated. The child remains the primary focus and the transition is based on their needs. Staff very much recognise that it can be a big step for children to have nights away from home. A parent talked of their experience and was amazed at how their child progressed, given that there were significant reservations about being away from home. Now, the child very much looks forward to their nights away. Their experience has been so positive that it has laid the foundations for increasing their independence and going to a residential college in the future.

Children are supported by staff who are aspirational for them. Staff are constantly seeking ways to assist children to develop their independence. Staff create enjoyable activities with an educational element. Therefore, children are continually learning and thriving thanks to the outstanding care provided.

Staff are sensitive to the challenges faced by families with disabled children. They go above and beyond to provide support to children and their families. For example, when a child was very poorly in hospital, their carer reached out to the head of residence who supported both the child and carer while the child was in hospital. They ensured the child's care needs were met. In addition, the head of residence provided emotional support to the carer during a worrying time. The carer is extremely grateful for the support provided and said staff always go 'above and beyond with everything they do, from the bottom of their heart'.

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. Staff work hard to help children recognise their own self-worth. For one child, this has meant that they have recently been offered an employment opportunity that they never expected. This is purely down to their experience of the residential provision and the positive impact it has had on many areas of their life.

The education and care staff have a seamless approach to supporting and caring for children. Information is readily exchanged about the children, and this allows all staff to remain fully up to date about the children's needs. Furthermore, some education

staff work in the residential special school and thoroughly enjoy this. As a result of this, there is a 'whole child approach'. Children are flourishing and being supported to follow their dreams for their futures.

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

Staff have a proactive approach to safeguarding which is embedded in all aspects of their work. They are supported in their roles with comprehensive policies and procedures. Safeguarding training for staff is prioritised and includes a very strong emphasis on recognising the increased vulnerabilities of disabled children. Staff have an excellent understanding of these vulnerabilities, and this helps them to keep children safe.

Staff are highly skilled in supporting children with complex medical issues. When needed, staff have specific training relating to an individual child's needs. There is a robust medication process in place that is subject to regular oversight and auditing. There have not been any medication errors since the last inspection. Children are cared for safely and with exceptional care and compassion.

The children who stay in the residential provision are keen to attend as it is widely known in school that children have great fun when they are there. There have not been any incidents of any kind since the last inspection. Children access a safe environment that is suitable and fully equipped to meet their individual needs.

Staff and children have warm and nurturing relationships. Staff know how important relationships are in supporting children to remain safe and feel able to raise any worries. One child felt able to speak to staff about a worry that he had about a friend. This information was acted on and the child's friend and their family were supported during a very difficult time.

Safer recruitment practices have been followed which ensure that all staff are safe to work with children coming for overnight breaks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of residential is highly experienced and committed to providing children with outstanding care. She has high aspirations for the children receiving care and works extremely hard to ensure that all children have opportunities to have fun with their friends, develop their skills and remain safe.

The staff work hard to develop and sustain commendable relationships with children's families and external agencies. Families value the support from the residential provision. They are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits for the children and families when children go for overnight stays.

Engaging with the local community is a real strength of the provision. Leaders have been proactive in establishing links with the community to strengthen the awareness of individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, research has been explored about suitable projects that would positively impact on the lives of the children. Links have been made with a local care home for the elderly and a homeless charity. These contacts have provided children with an insight into the lives of people in their own community and created opportunities for children to feel included in the community.

Staff receive regular supervision sessions with a manager. Team meetings are held monthly. These provide an opportunity for the team to share their experiences of working with the children and reflect on their practice to determine how it can be improved even further.

Leaders use the independent visitor's reports to regularly assess the difference the service is making for children. As a result, they have a very clear understanding of how to support children to make continued progress.

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: SC006451

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Tracey Lawrence

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 0116 273 7151

Email address: office@ashfield.leicester.sch.uk

Inspector

Lizette Watts, 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.

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, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024