

# Eaton Hall Specialist Academy

Eaton Hall School, Pettus Road, Norwich NR4 7BU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this residential special school**

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy is a day and residential special school in Norwich that caters for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. The residential accommodation is in a purpose-built building in the school grounds.

There are 55 pupils on roll, 31 of whom board up to four nights a week. Inspectors met the majority of boarders during the inspection.

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

The head of care has been in post since 2014 and has a relevant qualification.

The school is a member of the Broad Horizons Educational Multi-Academy Trust.

### **Inspection dates: 30 September to 2 October 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:** 6 June 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children enjoy staying in residence because they feel safe, have fun and are able to try new activities. They like to play with staff, who listen to them, support them and help them to be the best that they can be. They see themselves as active partners with staff in their success. This is fostered by staff, who form a safety net that supports children to think for themselves, take chances and make mistakes.

Staff know children exceptionally well. They confidently use a research-based, individual relationship-based approach to build trust. Residential staff make a significant contribution to a holistic approach whereby children's well-being is first and foremost in the day-to-day operation of the school and residence.

Children receive a range of therapeutic interventions to help them, including play and drawing therapy, and dance and movement therapy. Parents can also access a short programme to help them to better understand their child's needs and behaviour. Parents express confidence in their relationships with staff and in staff's influence on their child's progress.

Children benefit from highly skilled staff who flex and amend individual support arrangements for each child. Children learn that they can trust staff to help them to manage their feelings of distress and anxiety and find ways of communicating anger or upset that reduces the risk of harm to themselves or others. Children enjoy the rich vein of humour and tolerance that staff use to help them to overcome difficult feelings. They speak about staff with affection.

Many children have experienced difficulties in attending school, making friends or experiencing success. Staff are aspirational about the progress children will make. A carefully crafted individual plan is created with each child. The things that are important to them are woven into their daily experiences, as well as a wealth of activities and opportunities that enrich their lives. Children talk about other children as their friends, they go to school, and many have made great progress in reading. Some children are beginning to return to mainstream education through carefully managed reintroductions that include a reduction in residential nights.

Staff encourage children to aspire for their futures. For example, if a child wants to be a professional footballer, they are encouraged to be part of the school team and to join a community team. One child was keen to show inspectors the team photos around the residence, with them proudly wearing their football kit. Other children said they wanted to be mechanics or cooks and were able to explain what activities they were working on that supported their goals.

Older children progress to staying in an independence flat. The children who stay there feel proud of their achievements that helped them to get there. They consider

it a privilege to be able to demonstrate the skills they have in self-care and making positive choices, and practical skills such as shopping, cooking and housework. Staff help them to think about how to use their learning and new skills independently when they return to their home areas, so that they can better manage the challenges that they may face in the future. They are excited to share their success with other children, and plan celebratory activities for other children in residence. This builds their confidence and helps other children to understand what the steps in their progress are leading towards.

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

Children are safely nurtured by staff, who use consistent boundaries that develop to reflect their individual needs and progress. This helps children to better understand their past traumatic experiences and feelings and find solutions that work for them.

Staff use their skills in continuously observing and interpreting children's behaviour to recognise when children are experiencing difficult emotions and may need additional support. Interventions are incremental, starting with small but significant distractions and redirections, reminding children of the actions that have helped them previously. More restrictive measures are used minimally, and all incidents are monitored so that staff can reflect on their actions and amend their practice when necessary. This builds children's trust and confidence in recognising safe relationships.

Governors demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding and are proactive in their oversight of children's safety and well-being. The governor responsible for safeguarding works closely with the designated safeguarding leads and takes their responsibilities seriously. The residential governor, along with other senior members of the trust, visits and spends time with children. This helps them to understand children's vulnerabilities.

The independent visitor is an experienced professional from another school. They visit regularly and are known to the children. Their reports are comprehensive accounts that evaluate children's experiences. Governors carefully scrutinise the reports, and support and challenge the head of care to oversee continuous development in children's safety and welfare.

Children feel confident in making a complaint, grumble or suggestion and have confidence in the process. Staff routinely listen to children's views, and their opinions influence residential life and their day-to-day experiences. One parent explained that staff never dismiss her child's opinion, but show great consideration for his views, because they want him to feel safe and happy when he stays overnight. This minimises worry, dissatisfaction and complaint because children play a significant role in shaping their own experiences.

Staff work together to understand each child's whole-life experiences and seek to minimise potential harm, both within the school and when the child returns home.

Staff are vigilant. They recognise any potential risk of harm in children's behaviour or conversation. Proactive and creative safeguarding practice includes rapid and persistent referral to external safeguarding professionals or health or welfare professionals, to get children and families the help they need to minimise risk or address unsafe situations.

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

Leaders are appropriately experienced and qualified and understand the principles of safe and effective childcare. Leaders and managers actively promote a culture where children and their happiness are central to all developments in the residential provision.

The actions of all staff in the school and residence demonstrate that they have a single, shared vision to equip children to take their place in family life and in mainstream education. This vision stems from an energetic senior leadership team, led by a headteacher who is passionate about providing a foundation for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children to build positive futures. Trustees play an active role in supporting this vision.

A child-centred approach pervades every aspect of school life. No matter what their role, all staff know each child's stress and progress points, and provide support for them to thrive. Safeguarding and children's welfare are integral to staff training programmes. They are woven into learning and development activities that support the continuing development of therapeutic interventions and revised approaches to holistic placement planning.

Staff routinely engage in open and reflective practice discussions, keen to learn from colleagues about how children are best supported, they listen and take account of children's views about the way their education and care is being delivered. Established multidisciplinary meetings ensure there is effective information-sharing, and have oversight to ensure that staff take prompt and appropriate action to respond to children's needs.

Staff value the wide-ranging help the school provides to support their emotional health and well-being, as well as develop their professional practice. However, absenteeism remains a constant feature in an otherwise stable and consistent team of staff. Agency staff are not used. Staff work additional hours to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff to care for children well. Leaders have recognised that this creates additional stresses for staff who maintain the rota and leads to further absenteeism. They have yet to find a resolution to these difficulties.

Senior leaders are fully aware of children's progress and take steps to remedy any shortfall in resources or in help available to children. For example, a social worker thanked the school for arranging mental health support for a child when local health services were unable to do so. Persistent challenge to safeguarding professionals

ensured that the risk of criminal exploitation of a child was recognised, and they were given the protection that they needed.

Significant improvements in the monitoring of residential functions have enabled improved action plans. These are a work in progress, to ensure that they are aspirational and developmental. The head of care participates in local area professional meetings to share good practice and learn from other residential provisions.

There are no unmet national minimum standards.

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

### **Point for improvement**

- The registered person should consider how to improve staffing sufficiency arrangements to reduce the need for staff to work long hours to cover absenteeism.

### **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:** SC038324

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Peter Lambert

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01603 457480

**Email address:** [office@eatonhallacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@eatonhallacademy.co.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Denise Jolly, Social Care Inspector

Dan Williams, 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024