



## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Changes to the senior leadership of the school have been managed well, with no disruption to the residential pupils.
- Leaders, managers and all staff share a commitment to supporting residential students to fulfil their potential and achieve their goals.
- The governance of the school is effective. Governors are working with the current leaders to recruit a permanent headteacher. Interim arrangements are strong.
- Safeguarding is in safe hands. Skilled and effective leaders manage safeguarding and child protection matters in line with relevant legislation.
- Residential students are positive about their experiences. They appreciate the support that staff provide and the family-like environment created by staff.
- Residential students form positive relationships with the staff and develop a sense of safety and protection.
- A wide range of therapies is provided on site, so pupils have easy access to them if needed.
- Effective engagement and collaboration with education staff ensure that residential students receive a high standard of support, which meets their specific needs.
- Senior leaders and managers know the school's strengths and areas for development. They demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. They continue to work, with the support of governors, to deliver the school's development plan.
- Residential students and the residential staff are very happy at the school.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Continue with discussions about the plans to further invest in the residential provision.
- Continue with plans to extend the provision of sensory equipment and information technology in the residential accommodation.
- Continue addressing the recommendations made as a result of the external safeguarding audit.
- Develop the independence programme in line with pupils' wishes.

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

- Ensure that all areas of Appendix 3 of the national minimum standards are recorded in a format that evidences that senior leaders are monitoring the effectiveness of practices.
- Ensure that all policies when next reviewed include reference to appropriate legislation and guidance.
- Undertake a risk assessment in relation to the horses that are stabled in the school grounds.

## Inspection judgements

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

Residential pupils receive very good-quality individualised care and support to meet their changing needs. The staff are successful in forming highly positive relationships with the pupils. As a result, pupils make significant progress as they learn to trust the staff and listen to the advice and guidance they give them. Progress is made in areas that include social skills, life skills and improving behaviours. The staff know the pupils well, have excellent knowledge of their needs and risks and share this with the school staff. This enables consistency in the delivery of care and close monitoring to ensure that pupils make continued progress during both school and residential time. A strength of the school is in establishing positive relationships with parents, carers and other professionals involved in the pupils' lives. Parents commented very positively about the care their children receive.

The residential pupils have a clear and strong voice at the school and are encouraged to air their views and feelings. Work undertaken since the last inspection has increased the number of avenues available for pupils to share their views and wishes. These include tutor sessions and house meetings that are supported by the governors visiting the residential units and listening to the pupils. This has led to pupils' self-esteem and confidence increasing as they feel valued. Pupils said that they enjoy their time at the school and the residential experience. They are very positive about the range of activities on offer but voice their wish to have more independent time as they get older and access to more community activities – local, national and global. The promotion of pupils' independence is integral to their experience in the residential setting. Leaders and managers have taken the feedback from pupils on board. The recording of individual progress has improved since the last inspection, and there is a continued plan to improve further.

The health arrangements for the residential pupils are excellent. Health is managed by a school nurse who is highly effective in monitoring pupils' health needs and ensuring that they have the appropriate support. Through liaising closely with parents and carers and compiling medical care plans, the staff have the necessary detailed knowledge of the pupils' medical conditions and medication requirements. Medicines are administered safely, and good processes are in place if an error did occur, although these are extremely low in number.

The school focuses on the emotional well-being of pupils as well as their physical health. Therapy intervention is well resourced. The pupils benefit from the availability of art, music and play therapists, in addition to a team of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. Therapeutic provision is integrated into all aspects of the school, including the residential setting. The therapists focus on each pupil as an individual and tailor their input to meet their particular needs.

The residential accommodation is in general of a very good standard although some areas, such as bathrooms, vary in standard. The much-improved bathrooms in some

of the houses have been very well received by the pupils and provide increased privacy. Commitment to further investment is currently an area being looked at by the governing body. Pupils like their living accommodation and enjoy the time spent in their houses. More sensory equipment and information technology are being considered, which would benefit the pupils' enjoyment and communication.

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

The residential pupils said that they feel safe and reported that they can easily talk to the staff if they have any concerns. Several residential pupils who spoke to the inspector feel that the residential provision is a safe space, that their privacy is respected and that they are not subject to bullying.

Safeguarding matters are very well managed at this school. The designated safeguarding lead for the school heads a team of staff that has safeguarding responsibilities. The safeguarding team is very experienced and knowledgeable in all relevant areas. Team members are highly organised and meticulous in keeping records. They all undertake specialist training for their role and keep this regularly updated. Safeguarding professionals in the local authority commented that the school seeks advice and guidance whenever there are concerns about safeguarding. Information is shared promptly with external safeguarding agencies, and the school works in an open and transparent way when investigating incidents or concerns.

A recent external safeguarding audit, commissioned by the interim headteacher, resulted in recommendations that form part of the school's self-evaluation plan. Overall, this was a positive safeguarding audit with the recommendations being addressed in line with identified timescales. For example, staff are to receive training on female genital mutilation, in January 2019, and the implementation of risk assessments in relation to radicalisation.

There is a common awareness of the delicate balance between protecting pupils and developing their independence. The school is further developing its systems and practices to lessen the risks and to continually educate pupils to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour is closely monitored by senior leaders. Physical intervention is used only as a last resort to safely manage pupils' behaviour. Knowing the residential pupils very well, the staff are able to successfully implement personalised strategies to help them self-regulate their emotions and manage their difficulties. The behaviour of residential pupils significantly improves through successful, individualised support strategies with the necessity for physical intervention being low.

Recruitment procedures are rigorous and minimise the risk to pupils from unsuitable adults working with them. Health and safety matters are organised well, and systems are in place to monitor and ensure that all health and safety matters are addressed appropriately. It was noted during the inspection that there is no risk assessment of the horses stabled on the school site.

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

The school has seen changes in its leadership since the last inspection. The head teacher retired and changes to the governing body have taken place. The current two interim head teachers have managed the changes well with no negative impact on the residential experiences of the pupils. The school has continued to run smoothly and continues to provide a happy environment for the pupils. The governing body is pro-actively seeking a permanent head teacher.

Leaders and managers with responsibilities for the residential provision are passionate and highly committed to ensuring that the residential pupils have a very positive experience at the school. Managers lead by example, setting high standards and adopting a child-centred approach. The managers know the pupils well, develop warm and friendly relationships with them and promote an atmosphere of achievement and positivity.

The interim headteacher is working closely with the senior leadership team and governing body to develop the school. In particular, decisions need to be made about future investment in the residential provision, looking at the future needs of pupils. Consideration is also needed about the upgrading and development of the residential provision, in particular bathrooms, and about expanding the provision of sensory equipment and information technology in the residential houses.

The staff receive good-quality training appropriate to their roles and the needs of the pupils. Training is subject to review as the needs of pupils change. Staff receive regular supervision that provides reflective time for them. Policies and procedures provide the staff with clear direction and strong guidance. Many policies are currently being reviewed. Those policies viewed during this inspection identified the lack of reference to legislation or guidance. For example, the missing from care policy does not refer to the local authorities' run away and missing for home and care procedures (RMFHC).

Leaders and managers have a good understanding and awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school's development plan identifies those areas in the residential provision that need developing. Additional developments since the last inspection include the extended day and flexi provision, further restructuring of the staff with the appointment of team leaders, introducing education support assistants that has strengthened the integration of school and the residential setting, providing consistency for pupils, and embedding the waking day curriculum.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to

the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** 1159380

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Ms Jacqui Tovey

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Liz Driver, social care inspector



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