

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a good residential provision. The new, acting headteacher has improved the monitoring of the residential provision. Staff spoke highly of the immediate effect that he has had at the school.

Children make progress in their educational attainment and attendance from their starting points. The staff encourage and support children to develop study skills and complete homework. Independence is nurtured by the staff. Older children in the residential provision mentor the younger children. This creates a family environment in which any disagreements are resolved openly and honestly.

The staff have a positive impact on the children's lives. The staff forge excellent relationships with parents and carers. Every day is organised so that children have positive experiences of boarding, regardless of how their behaviour has been during the school day or at home.

The staff support new boarders well. Families reported that introductions to boarding are well managed. When a child is ready to leave boarding, this is reduced gradually so as not to cause difficulties for the child and their family.

The children's views and opinions are gained through daily meetings after school. This inclusive approach means that children are involved in making choices about their care.

The children have access to a range of interesting and stimulating activities. Managers monitor the activities that are chosen, with a view to encouraging greater variety. The activities promote social interaction and lessen isolation.

Parents are positive about the residential provision. They see the value that it provides and can identify the progress that their children make. A parent said, 'Staff are fantastic. They have really helped my child in more ways than I can explain.'

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

The staff understand safeguarding procedures and their responsibility to safeguard children. The head of care and the deputy are both part of the designated safeguarding team at the school.

An independent listener visits the school regularly and speaks with the children about their experiences of boarding. An independent visitor is also able to raise any concerns on behalf of the children. This provides the children with additional safeguarding protection.

The staff are well trained. They are skilled at de-escalating the unwanted behaviours that the children can display. There have been no physical interventions since the last inspection. The staff use restorative approaches when a child exhibits difficult behaviours. Such behaviours are a rarity, with only two sanctions imposed since the last inspection.

Children do not go missing from the residential provision. Staff understand the process to safeguard the children well if this were to happen.

A maintenance manager ensures that any damage to the residential provision is repaired quickly. Health and safety and fire checks are carried out weekly. Some of these checks are not recorded. This means that it is unclear whether this monitoring has happened.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The acting headteacher is committed to improving the residential provision. He has developed a good working relationship with the experienced head of care and they meet together once a week for a formal discussion. This provides the headteacher with clearer oversight and awareness of the residential provision.

The staff receive supervisions and annual appraisals and have access to training opportunities. The staff said that they benefit from these formal opportunities to reflect and to identify areas for development. All staff hold a relevant level 3 diploma or higher.

The management team has a thorough understanding of children's plans and progress. Children's case files are clear, concise and up to date. This ensures consistency of care.

A school governor visits the residential provision every term to meet the children and staff and provides a report on the quality of the care that the children receive. The acting headteacher has made improvements to this process and has, in part, addressed a recommendation raised at the last inspection. However, analysis and commentary from the acting headteacher are lacking. This means that opportunities for driving improvement are missed.

Monitoring of records in the residential provision requires attention. The head of care was unaware of incomplete maintenance checks, inaccurate information, incorrect dates and unsigned documents. This leads to unnecessary risks.

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

Recommendations

- Provide managerial commentary and oversight of the independent visitor's reports.
- Ensure that essential maintenance checks are undertaken within appropriate time frames and recorded accurately.
- Ensure that fire checks in boarding are undertaken and recorded in accordance with the fire risk assessment.
- Ensure that all boarding records are accurate and provide sufficient evaluation and oversight.

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: SC056397

Teacher in charge: Mr Paul Delamaine

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Ricky D'Arcy: social care inspector (lead)



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