

Saxon Hill

Inspection report for residential special school

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| Inspector | Jackie Callaghan |
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| Head of care | Jon Thickett |
| Head / Principal | Wendy Arnfield |
| Date of last inspection | 28 November 2006 |

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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| Outstanding: | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good: | this aspect of the provision is strong |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound |
| Inadequate: | this aspect of the provision is not good enough |

Service information

Brief description of the service

Saxon Hill Community School is a co-educational special school administered by Staffordshire County Council Education Department. It is located in a suburban area approximately one mile from Lichfield city centre. The school is part of the council's physical disability support service that offers support to people outside the school via in-house and outreach work. The sleepover club is a unit with 14 beds attached to Saxon Hill that offers short break care to pupils who attend the school. It was purpose built and operates Monday to Thursday nights inclusively, in term time. There is a dedicated team of care staff that operate independently of, but in close liaison with, the teaching and other staff. The sleeping accommodation comprises of six times two bedded rooms and two single rooms. There are currently 83 pupils on roll, including 34 boarders and 49 day pupils.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection undertaken by one Ofsted inspector. The inspection looked at the key Residential Special School National Minimum Standards (NMS) under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. All outcome areas were inspected with the exception of Economic Wellbeing. At this inspection Staying Safe, Positive Contribution and Organisation was judged as good. Being Healthy and Enjoying and Achieving were outstanding. One new recommendation was raised in relation to Organisation and one recommendation remains in relation to Economic Wellbeing.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, the school was asked to: obtain suitable bedroom doors; ensure fire log books and record of servicing hoists is standardised; create a system for recording daily and weekly vehicle checks; ensure all care staff have personal development plans; enhance the staff vetting procedures by renewing Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks every three years; and to ensure that planning continues regarding changing access to the sixth form teaching area. The school has purchased new doors and these are in the process of being fitted and has checked with the local fire service and health & safety to ensure the doors meet regulations. Fire log books and the record of servicing hoists are now detailed in a pro forma and the daily and weekly vehicle checks are now formally recorded. This promotes children's safety as the forms give good detail of information to enable managers to identify any deficiencies in the equipment. The school now renew staff's CRB checks every three years, and all care staff have personal development plans. As a result, children's well-being is further safeguarded because these checks and plans ensure that the staff group remains appropriately equipped and skilled. The school has architectural plans in place and has been granted a budget to build onto the back of the sleepover club. This will create a new entrance for the sixth form. Although, no physical alterations have been made as yet, and the access to the sixth form still runs through the residential unit, which potentially compromises children's privacy.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's individual health and intimate care needs are identified and assessed at an early stage. This is recorded in a clear easily accessible plan for each child detailing how his or her specific and general health issues are to be addressed. Health needs which may impact on future outcomes for the child are identified at the earliest opportunity and staff, in partnership with parents, actively seek out the services needed to address these. For example, involvement of specialist health workers such as children and mental health service (CAMHS). This means the children receive care that actively promotes their well-being and health. Children's medical needs are safely met. The school operates a well developed and effective medication policy and practice guidance which specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication. Children's files contain signed medical consent forms. This ensures the school's staff have permission to provide first aid and over the counter medicines. Children's well-being is being promoted through staff training in a number of health related areas including first aid. Staff are aware of the appropriate procedures to follow and staff's competence to administer medication is continually assessed. Children's well-being is further promoted because residential staff are supported by a nursing team that work at the school. This enables the school to meet the ever-changing and complex health care needs of some of its children and is a commendable working partnership.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's privacy is respected because the school has clear guidance on how to work with them at intimate and personal care times. Staff show a very high regard for the privacy of children and assist them with personal care tasks in a quiet, sensitive manner. Children's welfare is further promoted because they are clear about how to make a complaint. Children say they are very confident that their concerns are addressed and that they know about the complaints procedure. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns made known by children. So helping children and staff to work together to ensure care is continually appropriate. Children's welfare is protected because staff receive training in child protection and demonstrate a good knowledge of policies and procedures. The school refers all possible child protection matters to the appropriate social work team, if only for information. Children are protected from bullying by others. The provision is proactive in creating a culture within the school that does not tolerate bullying and provides support to vulnerable children. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying in the residential unit. The school takes steps to ensure that children who are absent from the school without consent are protected in line with written policy and guidance. Children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. The school's behaviour management policy and strategies have, as their prime objective, the creation of a safe, supportive learning environment. There is a very evident warmth in the relationship between the staff and the children. The staff team, who have been working at Saxon Hill for many years, have built up a strong bond with the children. Staff are very comfortable with their role of setting clearly understood boundaries while maintaining a high quality relationship between themselves and the children. Children live in a school that provides physical safety and security. The school has regularly updated risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire, children's behaviour, and activities. Children learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill. Safe procedures are in place to protect children with tests on the fire systems and other electrical equipment taking place at the appropriate intervals. This ensures that children can exit swiftly and calmly in the event of a fire. The school operates a good staff

vetting procedure and staff demonstrate awareness of the need to safeguard children. All files hold evidence of recruitment checks having taken place prior to staff being deployed, which includes an appropriate enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children's educational progress at the school is actively supported by the residential provision. Children receive an excellent level of support. The school values, promotes and encourages all of their children to make the best of their educational opportunities. Children explore their potential and develop their personal interests because staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner. Consequently, the care, learning opportunities and activities are excellent. Their thinking is challenged as they learn about interesting themes, for example, they participate in activities about the taste of different foods. This not only educates them about eating healthily but encourages them to work cooperatively with their friends and understand the value of teamwork, as they explore together what the yogurts taste like. Children receive superb individual support when they need it. Considerable effort is put into combining social, education, care and health needs into a package which, will not only meet identified needs but promote development. Children freely initiate interaction and seek help with various staff members on duty. Their well-being is positively promoted as they are each allocated to a key person to ensure their continual care needs are met. Thus, children benefit from receiving a short break service because staff are focused on their success, needs and achievements.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are developing an awareness of others as they share and take turns, for example when playing on the computer or up to date games consoles. They are learning to take responsibility as they help to tidy up at the end of mealtimes. Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run. No child is assumed to be unable to communicate their views and the children use many communication aids to enable their voice to be heard. Staff demonstrate that they place great value on the views and opinions of the children in their care and every effort is made to assist with their communication. The school has two independent advocates who visit regularly and who are able to provide a wide and varying degree of support, empathy and understanding. The school's quality assurance systems are centred on the experience of children and their families. This ensures that parents also feel listened to and they are frequently consulted after their child has had a short stay at the school. Children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at the school. Staff have a good understanding on how the children's placement plans should cross reference with other information such as their education targets. The school's records respect the need to value diversity, for example, the cultural and religious needs of all children. Written plans demonstrate that children receive appropriate external support as the school has a pro-active approach to working with other professionals. Consequently, all children receive individualised care. In accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families when receiving a short break at the school. The school understands the value and importance of communication and contact with parents. None of the children appear to be, or report being, isolated. They form friendships quickly with others in the school. Significant time is taken to build relationships and share information with

families. This good working partnership promotes children's welfare as they get consistent messages from both home and school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils. Although, a description about the development of extended days is missing. Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. They are kept safe and provided with excellent care as they have sufficient numbers of staff to look after them. Children are making good progress because staffing in the school is well organised and effectively managed. Children receive the care and services they need from very competent staff. Their welfare, safety and developmental progress is strengthened because staff receive a planned induction and a good training programme. As a result, they become sure of their job role and individual level of responsibility very quickly. Children benefit greatly from this positive approach as they are cared for by highly motivated, suitable and knowledgeable staff. Good systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of children currently receiving a short break service at the school. The organisation has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the head of care and the senior care team. Saxon Hill, as an organisation, has delegated the responsibility for its monthly review of welfare to an independent person from the local authority. These visits are supplemented by visits from other special schools' heads of care. Records indicate that these visits take place with appropriate regularity and some are unannounced. The visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for children by looking at staff and management practices.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure during term time that the residential accommodation for pupils is reserved for the exclusive use of pupils for whom it is designated, with other pupils only having access by reasonable invitation of pupils living in that building (NMS 24.4)
- update the Statement of Purpose to reflect the extended day provision that is offered by the sleepover club (NMS 1.8)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.