

Saxon Hill

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
Type of Inspection	Key

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Head / Principal	Staffordshire Local Authority
Date of last inspection	30 January 2008

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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

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 operates 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 76 pupils on roll, including 31 boarders and 45 day pupils.

Summary

This was an announced inspection that focused on the key standards. All outcome areas were inspected, with the inspection concentrating on the medication systems, keeping the young people safe, the school's behavioural management processes and how the school is managed. No recommendations were raised as a result of this inspection.

Children enjoy being at Saxon Hill and benefit from clear, professional, effective and imaginative management. This coupled with a staff team who are skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic provides all children with stimulating and purposeful education and care.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to, update the Statement of Purpose and, ensure that the residential accommodation is reserved for the exclusive use of boarders.

The Statement of Purpose now fully reflects the extended day provision that is offered by the school. The school has built a conservatory onto the back of the sleepover club. This has created a new entrance for the sixth form so they no longer walk through the children's bedrooms. This promotes and safeguards children's privacy and welfare. Further structural alterations are planned for later in the year where the sixth form provision will be moved into another area of the school. This will make the sleepover club completely separate and provide them with yet more space.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children gain a superb understanding about the benefits of healthy living. They follow personal care routines with high levels of independence. There are efficient arrangements to ensure that medication is safely administered, ensuring that children's health needs are fully met and their welfare is safeguarded. There is excellent access to health care professionals such as qualified nurses and physiotherapists who work closely with staff and parents to identify and meet

children's needs. The school successfully fosters peer relationships that allow children to share affection, support and empathy. This was supported by the children as one commented that 'the staff and other pupils care about you'.

Children are provided with a nutritiously balanced and appealing menu, taking into consideration their likes and dislikes. The meals are of a high standard with alternative options always available. There is an abundance of fresh fruit and healthy snacks available. Most importantly, children have plenty of opportunities to fully participate in a variety of activities that are fun and suit their interests, skills and abilities. For example, making home made soup and then tasting the different soups to see which one they preferred. This ensures a fruitful range of health benefits, experiences and challenges. The children were very positive about the food and sleepover with one child saying 'I like the food and being with my friends, the staff are nice'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Overall, the school has an excellent focus on safeguarding and protection issues. Children using the service require high levels of support and supervision from staff whilst carrying out personal care. Staff recognise that not all children are the same and ensure they have privacy, choice and control over the support they need and how it is delivered. The school has outstanding leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safety and children's welfare is paramount. The children say 'sleepover is fun', 'sleepover is brilliant' and 'sleepover is fantastic'.

The school has created an extremely comfortable and warm space where children can make telephone calls in private. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns made known by children and others. This helps staff and children to work successfully together to ensure care is continually cohesive. The head of care monitors the complaints record to make sure that children's rights and entitlements are upheld and that the process is effective. Saxon Hill has an anti-bullying policy and bullying is known by all to be unacceptable. Any issues are discussed openly within the school ensuring children are protected.

Children are greatly protected by the school's child protection systems, policies and procedures, providing a safe and very secure environment that children enjoy. A parent confirmed this view saying that 'the school provides a very safe environment and that makes a very positive contribution to their wellbeing both physically and intellectually'. Staff receive wide-ranging child protection training which includes the protection of children with disabilities. There are written procedures for staff to follow if a child absconds from school. Procedures comply with requirements and ensures that children are fully protected. However, no children have ever left the school without permission.

Staff communicate clear expectations regarding boundaries which successfully helps children to begin to understand consequences for their behaviour. Children enjoy a safe environment, where risks are regularly assessed and actions to limit these risks are promoted. They are protected by a robust safety regime, where all portable electric appliances are tested annually, all hazardous substances are kept securely locked away and, an annual fire risk assessment is in place. Children take part in regular fire escape drills. They are given no warning that the drill will take place which demonstrates the staff's clear understanding of how children learn from first-hand experiences.

Children are protected by the organisation's robust recruitment systems that ensures all staff are subject to security checks such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures and references prior to their employment. Discussions with staff demonstrate that the system is maintained to a continuously high standard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Within the sleepover club, prominence is given to promoting education in the broadest sense and all children are encouraged in a variety of educational, community and leisure opportunities, both in and outside of the school setting. They are actively assisted to reach their potential as staff celebrate their educational achievements. Children develop their confidence and practical abilities and are helped and supported to access a variety of in-house and community based activities that enhance self-awareness, develop identity and improve self-esteem in an age-appropriate manner. The staff team promotes children's positive awareness of gender and diversity both within the school and the wider community.

Children receive inspiring individualised assistance, with the appropriate assessments and plans in place. Staff provide a child-orientated environment where learning and taking part is exciting and enjoyable. A staff member voiced that 'We have a creative staff group that promotes a healthy vibrant environment where children are firmly at the centre'. The overwhelming benefits of this approach is that children's participation in positive recreational experiences successfully contributes to their physical, social, spiritual growth and development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school's diligent systems consistently gain children's views about matters affecting their daily lives and the general running of the school. This helps children to have ownership of the setting and actively encourages a sense of belonging. Staff are keen to totally ensure that children play an active role in society. The children are continually encouraged to develop their thinking skills and are learning how to express themselves clearly using various aids and communication systems. This was echoed by a parent who says that the 'staff help the children to communicate and show respect for one another'.

The relationship between staff and children was seen as purposeful and created a supportive and caring atmosphere in which children feel secure and comfortable. Children are robustly supported in their transition when leaving the school to return to their family or when moving onto other adult settings. This ensures that the children's welfare is a top priority. Children are supported by meticulous care plans which copiously reflect their individual needs and wishes. Plans include thorough risk assessments which enable children to maintain their levels of independence in a safe manner.

There are comprehensive systems in place for the initial contact and sharing of information with families that is clear and inclusive. Parents and carers phone sleepover for progress reports and staff regularly contact them to keep them informed of any changes or issues of concern. Children are actively supported to maintain contact with family and friends whilst at sleepover. This approach was confirmed by a parent who commented that 'there is excellent communication, excellent standards of care from staff who understand that each child is individual'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children reside and learn in a fully inclusive environment which truly inspires them to respect and value their own needs and the differing needs of others. The standard of accommodation is good, providing a vibrant comfortable place for children which assists them with domestic style living. Children are encouraged to decorate their bedrooms with family photos and other items which reflect individual interests and preferences. Children display high levels of confidence in the staff's care as time, space and resources are used with great success. They move freely around sleepover, suggesting what they would like to do, for example, they request a short period of time to on the computer, which staff respects.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Children flourish as they are cared for by an exceptionally organised, committed management and staff group who are dedicated to providing care of the highest quality. The children have information about what they can expect which includes how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with. Parents have a clear statement on how a sleepover operates. Consequently, all parties are well informed about the running of Saxon Hill School.

Children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently. All staff receive a wide range of new and refresher training to ensure they are sufficiently equipped with skills to support and meet the needs of children in their care. The overwhelming majority of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. This approach to training means that all staff are continually learning about differences and similarities as they work together within a no-blame culture that means children receive a service that actively enhances their lives.

Children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare. Staff have great confidence in the people who manage them and managers value the staff. Professional supervision is well established and very effective. Regular staff meetings involving all staff, ensures consistency of approach and a professional working partnership. The Management of the school and sleepover club clearly work in harmony and, along with the staff team share a positive practical vision for the children who attend Saxon Hill.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Children are supported by a professional and well-informed team who successfully familiarise themselves with research, information and writings on equality.

Children and staff enjoy the stability of an efficiently run school. Systems for monitoring the operation of the residential school are excellent, and the school has an atmosphere of creative and focused direction with children's welfare clearly at the forefront. This was confirmed by a child who voiced that 'I have been here for nine years and love it'.

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):