

Saxon Hill

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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Inspector Andrew Hewston

School address Saxon Hill Special School, Kings Hill Road, LICHFIELD,
Staffordshire, WS14 9DE

Telephone number 01543 414892
Email headteacher@saxonhill.staffs.sch.uk
Headteacher Mr J Thickett

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Saxon Hill is a maintained special school. The school is for pupils with a wide range of physical, complex medical, associated sensory, communication and learning difficulties. Pupils are mostly from South Staffordshire.

The school 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 school has a 14 bed unit called 'The Sleepover Club' that offers individually based overnight care to both male and female students of the school who are aged between four and 19 years. 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 twin bedrooms and two single rooms. There are currently 68 pupils on roll of which 39 currently access overnight residential provision one or two nights per week.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for residential pupils	outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- Saxon Hill's residential provision has a strong and significant positive impact on the development of children and young people and on their quality of life. Relationships between children and staff are of a very high standard and children enjoy being in residence.
- Planning for the children is of high quality, highly personalised and responded to in a professional manner. Staff have a strong awareness of young people's the differing and complex needs.
- Children's families and carers are constantly kept up to date with their child's developments and encouraged to have an involvement with the planning process
- Children are protected through robust safeguarding procedures that are well known by staff. Children state that they feel safe within the residential provision.
- Equality and diversity is promoted through highly individualised care packages and celebrations of differing cultures and ways of life.
- Management systems are effective and ensure that meeting the children's needs is the primary focus of the residential service.
- Residence at the school is a highly sought after experience to support children and their families and is consistently appreciated by all those that are involved with the service.
- Although there are some minor developmental areas necessary regarding the national minimum standards these do not affect the direct outcomes for children and in most instances are already known by the school and are being addressed.

Outcomes for residential pupils

The outcomes for residential pupils is outstanding. Pupils benefit from residential provision that is highly supportive and inclusive, promoting every possible development of children. All children that use this provision achieve and develop in a wide range of areas that effect both the children themselves and their families or carers. A parent stated that because of the constant improvements of their child's social and living skills 'life at home seems to be getting less stressful and easier'.

Children develop independence and communication skills in the residential provision through effective planning and full involvement in the activities provided. Specific independence development is increased for older pupils to support their transition arrangements to move from the school. Children are involved with making decisions about their lives and the development of the school within children's meetings, school forums and the review process. This helps to develop their self esteem and their ability to affect change within their lives and the school. Children are also supported with making daily decisions relating to food and activities.

Children behave well during their time at the provision. They develop social skills through living within a well structured residential experience, where staff are able to respond to differing needs and promote ways that children can respect each others differences.

Excellent links are in place to ensure that children's education is enhance by the residential experience through specific targets relating to social skills being shared within both the school and residential environments

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the residential care is outstanding. Arrangements to support the differing range of children's needs are of an extremely high quality. The admissions process is well thought through and gradually supports children's understanding of the residential provision through excellent communication and visits with families and carers.

Communication systems ensure that children have a voice within the school through regular meetings completed on an individual basis and within larger groups. Children use different means of communication and these are well known by the staff team to support children to raise issues. Staff work well together and a key worker system is in place to allow for good practice relating to communication.

Children enjoy an excellent range of activities, taking place in the residential area, the school campus and the community. The school scout group is an initiative that has been recognised nationally as an area of highly effective inclusive practice.

Activities are well planned for, risk assessed and enjoyed by both children and staff alike. Children achieve and develop a range of skills through the residential experience. These are often photographed, documented, rewarded and celebrated. Thorough records of achievements are kept to show how children move forwards and learn.

Children's needs are able to be identified and supported through high quality placement planning and staff having a strong awareness of different children's likes and dislikes. Individual plans are reviewed on an annual basis within educational statement reviews to develop general targets for children, but systems for reviewing the specific residential plans need some development. The school is aware of this and it is within the residential action plan.

Children's health is fully supported through outstanding understanding of their complex needs and thorough organisation of medication administration. Health promotion is a central theme within the residential provision. Food and activity are considered to meet both the needs and preferences of individuals and different groups who stay on different evenings. Children were fully involved in the making and selling of a health fitness DVD to promote exercise and enjoyed this experience.

Children benefit from the ongoing refurbishment and decoration of the residential accommodation. Recent changes in bedroom doors, carpeting and the complete overhaul of the lounge area ensures that children have a comfortable and homely environment that fully meets their needs.

Arrangements for contacting parents are effective and supportive to both parents and children, allowing information to be shared in relation to both educational and residential matters. Parents state that the school are very good at contacting them and that staff are always available for discussions about their child's development and life at the school.

Residential pupils' safety

The provision for residential pupils safety is outstanding. Children's safety is of paramount importance within the school. Thorough policies and procedures are in place to ensure both staff and children's safety. This includes regular maintenance and checks on the provision including fire safety checks and drills. All areas of the school and activities within it are risk assessed and dangers responded to. Children state that they feel safe within the school.

Safeguarding procedures are known by all staff through regular training. Responsible individuals effectively respond to significant issues. There is a whole school ethos of care for the children this ensures any concerns are raised documented and acted on. Full and detailed records are kept of all safeguarding concerns. Recruitment procedures are robust and fully support the safety of children.

Behaviour management procedures are appropriate to the needs of the young people. The vast majority of the staff team are trained in de-escalation techniques and restraint, although this is very rarely necessary. Additional training forms part of the school action plan. Sanctions are rare and only used when children are aware of its purpose and staff understand it will be effective. Records relating to behaviour management fully support the safety and understanding of the children. Meetings ensure that children are aware of expectations relating to their behaviour including bullying and these are discussed in a proactive way.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The residential provision forms an important part of the whole school structure and fully compliments the education component of the school. Leadership of the residential provision is strong and those with managerial responsibilities have an excellent range of qualifications and experience. Managers have high aspirations for children's development creating a culture of children being supported to succeed.

Records relating to children are updated on a regular basis to support their development. This has created a wealth of information regarding the children and how they have moved on. A regular audit of the children's files would support an awareness of areas that need additional information.

Monitoring of the service is completed on a regular basis by a range of individuals including a representative from the local authority and independent visitor. Reports from these visits are informative and help to develop an awareness of how the provision is supporting children when read together. Some clarity with regard to which individuals are examining specific areas would give a more cohesive approach to this system. There is a well organised system of internal monitoring of the provision which has led to an in depth development plan to further meet the needs of the children. The school's policies and procedures are in line with the expectations of the national minimum standards. Staff have a good awareness of key documentation.

The provision is appropriately staffed. Staff are highly committed to the provision and turnover levels are low. Children therefore benefit from consistency in approaches to their care. Staff take advantage of differing training opportunities to further develop their skills within the school. All staff have either completed or are soon to complete National Vocational Qualification at level 3. Individual staff training needs form part of annual development meetings. Staff are well supported by management through regular formal supervision and team meetings.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- ensure a system is in place to review the school based placement plans
- ensure all staff have completed training in de-escalation techniques and restraint
- develop a cohesive approach to differing individuals monitoring the provision
- develop a system for auditing children's files.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23/11/2011

To all the children at Saxon Hill Sleepover Club,

Inspection of Saxon Hill

I visited the school recently and found that the Sleepover Club was an outstanding place to stay.

You are looked after by staff that really care for you well.

You do lots of fun activities and the food is very good.

Lots of plans are written down to make sure that do well. Staff make sure that you are healthy and have the right medicines.

It is good that you enjoy staying at the Sleepover Club and that you feel safe there.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Hewston