

Ash Field School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

Unique reference number for social care SC006451
Unique reference number for education 120349
Inspection dates 20/02/2012 to 22/02/2012
Inspector Martha Nethaway

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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

This is a maintained residential special school for 114 pupils on roll with 71 boys and 43 girls. There are 25 boys and 20 girls accessing the residential provision.

This school is for children from four years to 19 years of age who have a wide range of ability with a main presenting disability of a physical nature, often combined with one or more of a sensory, communication, learning or medical need. Integral to the school is a residential wing. This offers extended day activities including independence training and a Youth Club and has eighteen beds used Monday to Thursday evening on a rota basis.

The school serves Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland and houses an Assistive Technology Centre which assesses and recommends equipment for pupils in mainstream schools.

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2011.

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

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boardingschools.

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.

- Residential pupils benefit because the residential provision is highly inclusive with professional relationships existing between staff, parents and carers.
- Residential pupils are making outstanding progress in relation to their social and independence skills. Their health and emotional needs are fully met. They are well supported to reach their full potential.
- Residential pupils' progress and development is clearly charted. Care plans are effectively implemented in practice.
- Residential pupils enjoy and benefit from an extensive range of recreational and purposeful activities. This promotes excellent outcomes in relation to their independence and social skills.
- Residential pupils' holistic health needs are properly considered with focused and targeted support from a range of multi-agency professionals. The collaborative and partnership approach with working relationships is highly effective and supports outstanding outcomes for residential students.
- The school has robust procedures in place for the safe recruitment of staff. These are effectively implemented and monitored in practice.
- Staff commitment to the promotion of residential pupils' welfare and safety is underpinned by effective monitoring, training, policies and leadership.
- Leadership and management are visionary and residential provision is well led.
- Staff are highly enthusiastic, committed and dedicated to providing a high quality residential experience. Residential pupils' relationships are formed on trust and value is placed on individuality. Staff embrace equality and diversity in their daily

practice.

- Parents and carers receive excellent communication from the residential provision. Contact is easy and welcomed.
- The school meets the national minimum standards.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils thrive in an inclusive and supportive environment. They enjoy their residential experiences because it offers positive opportunities for them to grow in their independence. This increases their confidence, self-esteem and identity. The outcome for disabled pupils is that their physical independence is fully supported.

Residential pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are encouraged to feel positive about themselves and their abilities. Residential pupils are helped to develop strong social, emotional and behavioural skills. Their behaviour is successfully supported through the clear strategies of a behavioural plan, if this is required. The focus of the support is on de-escalation and re-assurance. The residential provision adopts no physical intervention with residential pupils. The outcomes for residential pupils are positive.

Residential pupils benefit from their residential experience because staff bring out the best in them, through carefully planned structures that include purposeful activities. As a result, residential pupils endeavour to achieve and attain the best in relation to their personal, social and educational life. One residential pupil commented, 'I have completed the training at school for being a sports coach. This evening I am facilitating the table top cricket game for pupils.' A number of different residential pupils facilitate sporting activities throughout the week. This is an integral part of the outstanding support provided to promote personal achievement by motivating and developing sports skills. This demonstrates the inclusive practice that the residential provision adopts. The outcome for residential pupils is that their abilities, interests and aptitudes are fully supported.

Residential pupils take every opportunity to enjoy their experience. For example, they have been involved in growing their own vegetables and fruits. This in turn has brought about many practical opportunities and discussions about healthy eating and lifestyles. One residential pupil stated, 'I really enjoyed growing onions, courgettes, lettuce, tomatoes and strawberries. We really learnt a lot.' The outcomes for residential pupils are that they develop enthusiasm for the appreciation of fresh, nutritious vegetables and fruit that they have grown.

Residential pupils are actively encouraged to choose healthy options and are effectively supported with their specific needs in relation to their diet and exercise programmes. Residential pupils have access to the multi-disciplinary team of nurses,

physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. One residential pupil stated, 'What I can say is that staff really know how to help you. What it means for me is boarding gives me more independence.' Another residential pupil stated, 'You get to be more confident. I love cooking and socialising and meeting up with my friends.' The outcomes are excellent because of the effective support for disabled residential pupils' sensory, communication, learning, medical and emotional needs.

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of the school's provision for residential pupils is outstanding. Residential pupils benefit because the pastoral support is excellent and resources effectively support their academic and personal progress. For example, information about residential pupils has been sought from parents, carers and other key professionals. This helps staff to effectively provide continuity of care, guidance and support. There is a highly evolved induction process for new residential students. For example, there is a 'buddy system' which helps engender confidence about overnight stays. One parent commented on the overnight stays, 'A really positive experience for my child; a great introduction to being independent.' The outcome for residential pupils is that they have opportunities to develop leadership skills and have found the buddy system a valuable experience.

Residential pupils are provided with excellent quality extra-curricular and leisure opportunities. This includes activities such as football, bowling, other team games and music and modern dance. Many of the residential pupils are eager to participate and get fit. One residential pupil explained, 'I love the Hip Hop dance club on a Thursday night. It is great fun.'

Staff are able to successfully bring out the best in residential pupils through insightful care plans, strong relationships and praise. Residential pupils are at the centre of staff practice, care, support and guidance. This results in residential pupils feeling valued and safe. Staff show excellent initiative when working to promote residential pupils' progress. For example, residential pupils' targets are now displayed in their bedrooms and this is done as a visual reminder to prompt at what they are working towards. This aids and supports improving outcomes for disabled residential pupils' development and independence.

The effective arrangements for health and the safe administration of medication is a key strength of the residential provision. There is outstanding support from nursing staff, dieticians and physiotherapists to aid and support residential pupil's medical, dietary and exercise routines. All residential pupils' individual needs are properly assessed monitored and reviewed. They continue to make outstanding progress.

Residential pupils enjoy healthy and nutritional meals. As a direct result feedback from pupils, the school is improving the range of foods on offer. Staff take great care to ensure that mealtimes are experienced as sociable and enjoyable events.

Residential pupils with gastric feeding tubes are fully supported and assisted by trained residential care staff. Equally, residential pupils who have difficulties with eating and swallowing (Dysphagia), are provided with highly effective support. For example, foods are prepared that are easily swallowed and of the correct texture and consistency. Their care and management is overseen by nursing staff. Outcomes for disabled residential pupils are excellent because of the first-rate nutritional care provided.

The residential accommodation and facilities are of a good standard and are safe and well-maintained. There are notable strengths in relation to the accommodation, especially related to the adapted bathrooms and shower facilities. Similarly, overhead hoists, profile beds and other aids and equipment are readily available to support disabled residential students. The school is making excellent progress with a new building programme to enhance the residential environment further.

Residential pupils' safety

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard the welfare of residential students. This is underpinned by effective practice and implementation of robust policies for safe recruitment of staff, safeguarding, behaviour management and health and safety. The residential provision's ethos and philosophy is supportive and provides a safe, supportive and caring environment. As a result, residential pupils feel safe and are safe.

Staff are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils. All staff are fully trained in the use of safeguarding procedures. One member of staff commented, 'As a staff team, we do annual training on child protection and safeguarding. This helps to remind us as staff of our important role in protecting children.' Policies, guidance and training are comprehensive and are successfully implemented in practice. The outcomes for residential pupils are that their welfare is being promoted effectively.

Residential pupils say that incidents of bullying, including racism, homophobia and cyber bullying, are not a concern that they experience in the residential provision. Residential pupils' awareness is helped through campaigns ran as part of the school's curriculum. One residential pupil commented, 'I have not experienced bullying and staff always expect good models of behaviour.' The school is vigilant through policies and guidance and staff training to prevent bullying. The outcomes for residential pupils are that bullying incidents are very rare.

Residential pupils' safety is given a high priority by the school. For example, in all bedrooms and bathrooms, an emergency pull cord is in place to summon immediate help. There are numerous displays throughout the residential provision to promote and heighten personal safety and appropriate provision for residential pupils' belongings. A recent innovative approach included inviting a police officer into the school to talk about safety for residential pupils and their belongings. This was

further developed with activities highlighting residential pupils' responsibilities. The outcomes for disabled residential pupils are that the promotion of safety is an integral part of the work at the school.

The residential provision provides a secure and safe environment for residential pupils. The senior management team have successfully implemented clear, comprehensive and thorough health and safety policies. Staff carefully consider potential hazards and minimise these through documented risk assessments which are reviewed and changed as circumstances require. All residential pupils are additionally protected because they regularly participate in fire evacuations so they know and understand the actions to take in the event of an emergency, to keep themselves safe.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The management and organisation of the residential provision is outstanding. This is because the residential provision is an integral part of school life. Staff are highly motivated, committed and unyielding in their desire to provide outstanding outcomes for residential pupils. They consistently provide high quality care, support and guidance. One parent commented, 'As parents, we feel staff are fantastic.' Another parent commented, 'Staff are committed and very approachable. They have a great relationship with the children.'

The leadership and management of the school have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is evident in the school's development plan. For example, the plan has clear timescales to outline the priorities relating to each area of the national minimum standards. This allows the school to establish and review the outcomes for disabled residential pupils with complex needs.

Residential pupils' continuity of care is given a high priority by the residential provision. Staffing levels are high in order for residential pupils to experience high quality care and personal support. This results in staff being able to effectively support the diverse needs of all residential students. The majority of staff are suitably qualified with some staff being trained to university degree level. Continual professional training of staff is well supported by the comprehensive in-house training programme. Disabled residential pupils benefit because staff skills and training are enhanced to meet their diverse and complex needs.

Staff have access to a full range of policies and procedures that support them effectively with the demands of the residential provision. Staff ensure that effective record keeping takes place, which supports a clear understanding of residential pupils' progress and development. As a consequence, this enhances excellent practice and the promotion of residential pupils' welfare.

Parents and carers highly praise the quality of the residential provision. One parent

commented, 'It is an excellent provision and of very great value to my daughter and her peer group.' Staff form highly professional relationships with parents and carers. For example, there are regular visits and phone calls to the residential provision. Two-way communication is actively encouraged and used to good effect. One member of staff commented, 'We really do not mind when parents or carers contact us. We want to assure everyone that we have their child's best interests at heart.' The outcome for residential pupils is that effective working partnerships allows for excellent consistency of care to be achieved.

Residential pupils' participation in residential life is actively encouraged. The school council ensures that views are well represented. For example, residential pupils are currently choosing the settees for the lounge. They have successfully influenced menus, activities and recreational events. The outcome for all residential pupils is that their voice and views remain central to residential life.

National minimum standards

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

What should the school do to improve further?

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.



20/02/2012

Dear Residential Pupils

Inspection of Ash Field School

Thank you for all your help during the recent inspection. You told me that you are receiving high quality care, support and guidance. You feel safe and are safe during your residential stay. The residential provision enables you to develop more independent skills. Your confidence, self-esteem and social skills are developed and encouraged.

Staff get to know you very well. Your relationships with staff are based on mutual respect and staff really value your identity and individuality. They champion your rights.

You told me that you give a high rating to the residential provision. You enjoy your time while you stay. Many of you particularly like the activities which are wide-ranging and fun.

Your health and well-being is at the forefront of staff practice. So there is a lot of staff around to help you during all stages of your stay. This allows you to get the correct level of care that you require.

Overall, Ofsted have judged the residential provision as outstanding.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Nethaway

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Martha Nethaway