

Saxon Hill

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

Unique reference number for social care SC038728
Unique reference number for education 124520
Inspection dates 07/12/2012
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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 2 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 78 pupils on roll of which 39 currently access overnight residential provision one night per week.

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.

- The residential provision at Saxon Hill impacts significantly on the development of the young people that use it. It has an outstanding impact upon their quality of life, expands their experience and encourages positive social interaction. Relationships between children and staff are of a very high standard and children enjoy being in residence.
- Care planning for the children is highly personalised and is of the highest quality. Staff are well trained and experienced and have a thorough understanding of each young person's different and complex needs. Young people are treated as individuals, their personalities and different characters are recognised and they are encouraged to express themselves.
- Children's families and carers are recognised as an essential resource and are encouraged to be fully involved in helping to plan their children's care. Parents confirm that they are kept up to date with the young people's progress, the staff are understanding of their anxieties and encourages them to maintain a regular and healthy dialogue.
- Safeguarding procedures are very well known and understood, by all staff. Senior managers understand their responsibilities within the wider safeguarding framework, which helps to ensure that young people receive a fully integrated encompassing service. Young people state that they feel safe and happy when at the sleep over club.
- Equality and diversity is celebrated throughout the school and the residential component. Awareness of individuality and the needs and rights of others are actively promoted. Highly individualised care packages ensure that each young

person's needs, both cultural and physical are met. Diversity and difference are explored by the regular celebration of cultural events, from different sectors of society, which ensures that the young people recognise and learn to value people's right to individual beliefs and values.

- The residential component within Saxon Hill school is very effectively managed. Meeting young people's needs are the primary focus of everything that is done.
- The residential experience is clearly valued, not only by the young people who use the sleep over club, but also by the parents and the social workers, involved with these young people. Canvassed opinion was universal in its praise in respect of the care given and the progress made by young people regularly attending the schools residential provision.
- The school continues to develop the outstanding service already provided by the residential provision. Systematic quality assurance, including extensive feedback from parents, children and staff is used to inform and plan for the future.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils benefit from a specialist service that is highly supportive and inclusive and is tailored to their ages, abilities and special needs. All young people that use the 'sleep over club' experience new social and personal situations enabling them to develop their independence and to grow in confidence. Young people make significant individual progress, in a wide range of areas that affect both their personal development and their families or carers, while having fun spending time with their friends.

Young people substantially increase their social skills and social opportunities. This is because outside education young people find socialising with peers difficult, due to: wide geographical spread, the lack of wheelchair accessible transport and complex physical disabilities. Young people develop independence and communication skills in the residential provision through effective planning and through full involvement in the activities programme

The 'sleep over club' enables friends to enjoy activities together. It enables them to develop meaningful relationships outside of education. Young people take part in a wide range of age appropriate activities, to access social facilities, such as bowling, shops and restaurants in the local community. Older pupils have the opportunity to practice specific independence skills, both in the 'club' and in the wider community, which helps support their transition from school to adult care provision. One young person commented, 'We could never have a friend for a sleep-over or go out with five friends who are wheelchair users. It would be impossible for my parents to transport us or organise. If the school didn't provide us with this opportunity it would never happen.'

Young people have compassion and a comprehensive understanding of others'

backgrounds, cultures, disabilities and personal needs. This shared residential experience enables them to provide sensitive reassurance and support to each other. It also promotes individual responsibility and maturity. The staff team also promote consideration and respect for others and this impacts positively on young people and results in them establishing long lasting meaningful relationships.

Young people take part in a wide and varied range of activities, which promote new interests, inclusion and community involvement. As a result, young people are making outstanding personal development with regard to mobility, communication and social skills. There are extensive facilities on site, available to all young people, including a hydro pool, soft play area, gardens, outdoor toys and play equipment. All young people are actively involved in planning their weekly programme of events that includes activities off-site and on-site. Some activities are focused and lead to specific skills being learned for independence.

Young people are involved with making decisions about their lives and the development of the school within young people's meetings, school forums and the review process. Young people's needs and views are integral to all aspects of how the 'sleep over club' operates. Young people feel included and valued because staff ask for their opinions and give them choices. Staff are skilled at facilitating discussions using a range of speech and language tools, this results in young people developing a strong sense of their own value and self-worth. Staff explore feelings and emotions, as well as more practical subjects such as making daily decisions relating to food and activities.

Young people generally 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 young people can respect each other's differences.

Excellent links are in place to ensure that young people's education is enhanced by the residential experience through specific targets relating to social skills being shared within both the school and residential environments. Young people learn extensive skills that develop mobility and personal care and help prepare them for moving on to college and adulthood. Through their residential experience the young people grow in independence and confidence. Parents stated, 'He is becoming less dependent on us and more willing to do things without us.'

Quality of residential provision and care

The quality of care is outstanding. Young people enjoy a professional service that effectively supports them to succeed as well as have an enjoyable and social stay. The admissions process is well thought through and supports young people's understanding of the residential provision. Introductions to residential stays are specific to each young person and their family. The staff team consult with parents and young people to ensure the mix of residents each night is compatible. All

information required to ensure the safety and well-being of each young person is gathered prior to their first stay. This informs staff of the actions they will need to take. For example, adaptations or aids to the accommodation, or staff training to best meet the needs of the young person.

All aspects of planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each young person. They are well focused, detailed and rigorously implemented and have a highly beneficial impact on outcomes. Staff know each young person exceptionally well, either from working with them over a long period of time, or from the multi-disciplinary information available on each of them. This includes regularly updated information from parents, as well as external professionals including physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and nurses.

Young people make outstanding personal progress based on their assessed abilities and needs. Each young person is supported by a team of experienced and highly motivated staff who have comprehensive knowledge of supporting and enabling young people with complex needs. Staff work well together and a key worker system is in place to ensure effective communication. This holistic approach ensures there is specialist support with regard to: education, care, speech and language, mobility, physical and emotional health, family support and transition. These arrangements and excellent communication between the education and residential teams result in staff consistency and continuity of care, and the outstanding support to, and knowledge of, young people's individual needs.

Young people are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs, by a team of experienced catering staff who are integral to the life of the school. Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Vegetarian and culturally appropriate foods are available. Feeding plans are well documented. They ensure what level of support is required at mealtimes for each young person, listing special diets, what crockery and cutlery are used, what help young people need to feed themselves and what strategies to employ if a young person refuses to eat or drink. Mealtimes are seen as social events and support young people with differing communication difficulties to improve their social interactions.

Young people's individual health and intimate care needs are identified and taken into account at an early stage. There are comprehensive health care plans, which ensure residential staff are accurately informed of each individual young person's needs. Staff are required to gain high-level competences before they can provide any health-related nursing tasks. Robust risk assessments are completed for manual handling and guidance is in place for staff to ensure that this is done in a safe way. As a result, young people reside in a healthy environment where their good health is comprehensively promoted.

Young people are encouraged, enabled and supported to contribute to their care by using an extensive variety of communication aids. Their views are clearly valued and

they are given choice wherever possible. There are explicit written plans, which summarise how a young person's needs are to be met, which are well known by the residential care staff, who professionally and sensitively address each individual's needs.

The 'sleep over club' is located in a separate wing of the main school building, which can be isolated from the main school, by a key pad security system. The residential unit provides a homely environment with comfortable furnishings. The lounge and dining area have been extensively redecorated and refurbished since the last inspection and provide sufficient space for the size of the group accommodated. Additional space is provided by the conservatory and sensory play room, there is ample space available for specific activities and individual time with an adult. Bed rooms are suitably furnished with ample space for those young people using wheelchairs. The short-term nature of each stay in residence and the high number of different young people using the residential accommodation each week is acknowledged. However, some additional attention should be given to enabling young people to personalise this space, to make it more homely and less institutional. The accommodation, however, is well maintained and furnished to a good standard.

Residential pupils' safety

Young people's safety is promoted at all times and is outstanding. The school ensures that each young person has a team of staff supporting them who have specialist knowledge of their individual needs. Staff support the young person to communicate their views and concerns, but can also advocate on their behalf. Given the complex needs of the young people, the school encourages the involvement and values the views of professionals and families with regard to the welfare and well-being of young people.

Young people are kept safe because staff have a clear understanding of what their key role and responsibilities are in terms of protection. All staff undertake child protection training relevant to young people with complex disabilities, which is regularly updated. They are well informed and take appropriate action to ensure any welfare issues are addressed. Responsible individuals effectively respond to significant issues. There is a whole school ethos of care for the young people; this ensures any concerns raised are documented and acted on. All safeguarding procedures are robust and regularly reviewed and are compatible with local authority guidelines and protocols.

There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere throughout the school and behavioural issues within the 'sleep over club' are minor. Staff are skilled at managing inappropriate behaviour, role modelling positive behaviour and promoting listening, and consideration of others. For example, young people learning to taking turns and sharing. All behaviour is managed through exploration of issues using effective communication. Any strategies implemented are regularly reviewed and discussed

with parents and other professionals concerned.

Only one formal complaint has been raised since the last inspection, however, this was to appeal a decision to reduce a young person's access to the service rather than to complain about the service offered. The school has processes in place to manage complaints and concerns quickly and to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Staff are fully aware of the complaints process and help young people raise any particular issues. Young people and their families both commented, either through surveys or verbally that they know how to complain, but have nothing they wish to complain about.

The quality of relationships between staff and young people is excellent and reinforces the very caring atmosphere witnessed throughout the school. Young people are very supportive of each other and very accepting of each other's differences. Staff receive effective training and information about countering bullying. They are very clear that any form of behaviour that causes distress to others, regardless of intent, is treated as a serious matter. Staff are provided with clear procedures to investigate any incidents and monitor outcomes. Young people also learn about bullying through the school curriculum. Discussion and role play enables them to explore issues related to bullying and gives them strategies and confidence to combat it.

The sensitive implementation of personal care is a key strength of the 'sleep over club'. As previously stated, staff are very aware that this might be the first, and only experience, some young people have of adults other than family members supporting with night time and morning routines. Guidelines and training for supporting young people with personal care is comprehensive. Staff are professional and meticulous in ensuring each individual's needs are met in line with their wishes. They are committed to empowering young people to undertake as much care for themselves as is possible and become confident in expressing preferences and choices.

Young People's safety is promoted by an established health and safety policy, which ensures risks are identified and appropriate action is taken to manage and reduce them. Young people and staff are involved in regular fire drills and there are regular checks on all fire and electrical equipment to ensure it is in good working order. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters, including first aid and fire awareness. The school regularly updates risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds.

Young People continue to be protected by the school's robust recruitment systems. These ensure all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work with young people before commencement of employment. The recording of these checks in staff employment files, lacks uniformity as such the monitoring of these systems is not as straight forward as it could be. The school ensures staff practice is in line with the most recent guidance by sending key staff on safer recruitment training.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The 'sleep over club' forms an important part of the whole school structure and fully compliments the education component of the school. The head of the residential provision provides excellent leadership and has the expertise, skills and knowledge to effectively manage the service. She forms part of a strong leadership and management team who have high aspirations for children's development creating a culture of young people being supported to succeed. Young people are central to all decisions and make outstanding progress within the service.

There is exceptional expertise in meeting the diverse needs of children. Staff consistently promote the voice of the young person and ensure that they are not subject to discrimination or marginalisation. Full attention is paid to individual children's gender, faith, ethnic origin, culture, linguistic background and disability.

A key strength of this service is the high ratio of professional staff skilled in meeting the complex needs of children. This service is organised to meet the needs of children first and foremost. Significant attention is given to the development and training of staff. Their training needs are regularly reviewed and revised in line with the complex changing needs of the young people. The staff team is professional and passionate about their work. They place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice and ensure their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated.

Records relating to children are updated on a regular basis to support their development. This has created a wealth of information regarding the young people and the developments that they have made.

The residential component of this school was judged to be outstanding at the last inspection and four recommendations were made. All of these recommendations have been appropriately dealt with. Systems are now in place to regularly review school-based placement plans and all staff have completed training in de-escalation techniques and physical intervention. Audit systems are in place for the regular monitoring of young people's care files and the external monitoring of the home is both cohesive and clear.

This school has substantial strengths and a sustained record of delivering outstanding performance and managing improvement. There is accurate and insightful evaluation of performance. Records relating to children are updated on a regular basis to support their development. This has created a wealth of information regarding the young people and the developments that they have made.

The local authority and senior management team provide effective monitoring and evaluation of relevant records, practice and events. This monitoring, parent and young person consultation and regular communication, ensures proper scrutiny and

ongoing development of all aspects of the service. This quality monitoring contributes to reports to the board of governors and informs the service's development plans. The board of governors also play an active role in the monitoring of the 'sleep over club' and the quality assurance function captures children's overall experiences and highlights any areas for improvement. These visits provide excellent additional safeguarding mechanisms for children by looking at staff and management practices.

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. 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 that the recording of pre-employment checks and vetting systems are uniform and consistent.
- look at ways in which individual young people may improve the personalisation of their bedroom area during their stay, to make it less impersonal and more homely.

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.



07/12/2012

To all the young people at Saxon Hill Sleepover Club,

Inspection of Saxon Hill

I really enjoyed visiting you recently. I found that the Sleepover Club was an outstanding place to stay.

The staff team that care for you are excellent.
They know you well and make sure you have lots of fun.

The food is very good and staff make sure that you are healthy and have the right medicine when you need it.

You are involved in making important decisions about menus, activities and outings.

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

Yours sincerely,

Trevor Hall