

Ash Field Academy

Ash Field School, Broad Avenue, LEICESTER, LE5 4PY

Inspection dates	07/03/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Young people feel safe and cared for by a staff team that show a consistently high knowledge of the differing complex needs of those they care for.
- Young people are consistently learning new skills and developing greater independence from being in residence. Improvements made by the young people while in residence have a significant impact on their lives and those of their families.
- The residential provision is highly integrated into the running of the whole school, with effective links between school and residence being well managed and records consistently monitored.
- Young people enjoy a range of activities that both supports their interests as well as developing their skills and promoting team work.
- Communication between residence and home is of a high quality with parents stating that staff are consistently helpful and supportive.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

This inspection was completed by one inspector following a half day notice period. Time was spent within the residential provision over two days and evenings, examining individuals files, records that staff have completed pertinent to the care provided and spending time with residential pupils including three meals. Discussions were held with members of the management team, staff, and parents as well as a range of residential pupils. Documentation completed at the school was also examined including health and safety and recruitment records, behaviour management records and relevant policies.

Inspection team

Andrew Hewston

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this 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. The school has a residential wing. This has 18 beds used Monday to Thursday evening on a rota basis.

The school serves Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school has made good progress and now meets all the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for young people are outstanding because they thrive and develop while being in residence. All young people progress, depending on their capacity to improve. Parents and young people report differing levels of improvement, with all of these being significant in helping young people improve their self help skills.

Young people enjoy excellent supportive professional relationships with staff. All staff have a strong awareness of the complex needs of the young people and how these are being responded to within residence and school. A parent reported that, 'it doesn't matter which staff you talk to, they all know what is happening with my daughter'. This fully supports young people's development and their ability to achieve their full potential.

The positive staff relationships support young people's ability to develop their social skills and prepare them for possible future communal living. The promotion of robust independence skills lies at the heart of the residential experience, with all young people gaining new skills.

Young people's health needs are robustly supported throughout their time within residence. Appropriate medication, linked with supportive speech and language therapy and careful consideration of meals provided allow young people's health to be improved. The wide range of activities, both on site and externally develops young peoples awareness that a healthy lifestyle is important.

Young people enjoy being in residence, 'I really like being here, spending time with my mates and trying new things out'. Young people are able to discuss how staff have helped them out through difficult situations in the past as well as promoting positive outlooks for the future. This allows the development of their self- esteem and ability to challenge preconceptions relating to their disability.

Staff's high awareness of differing communication skills allows young people to have a constant say in the residential provision, this ranges from care planning to deciding on which activities they would like to be involved in on a daily basis.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Young people are cared for sensitively and professionally, from the point of their induction into residence, through to their point of leaving. Links between the academic and care side of the school provision are closely meshed, giving a seamless continuity of care. This ensures that all young people have familiar staff with them in the day and evenings that are aware of their differing needs. Plans developed by the range of staff within the school are therefore highly personalised and highlight specific areas where the care staff can support difficulties that young people may experience, or to promote effective ways of working. Young people work to achieve specific targets to further support their development. Plans are updated following reviews and termly assessments to ensure that they are always meeting the needs of the young people effectively.

A wide range of activities are available for the young people, both within the school and the community. The residential area is very well resourced with differing games and pastimes that young people can be involved in. Young people also are able to access a range of more specialist areas such as the hydrotherapy pool within the school block to further support their enjoyment of

the residential experience.

Young people stay at the school for between one and three evenings, returning to their homes for the rest of the time. During their time in residence they are encouraged to contact family, where appropriate, with full details being kept on file. This allows news and information to be shared between school and home by the young person. Parents state that the residential staff are, 'always available to chat' and discuss issues relating to their child.

Young people's health is of an extremely high priority within the school. All meals nutritional values are examined to ensure they are appropriate for the young people, and differing cultures and conditions are catered for. Food is of an excellent quality and pupils are given a choice of meals so that there is always something that they like. Mealtimes are pleasant social occasions between the young people. Young people with gastric feeding tubes are fully supported and assisted by trained care staff. Equally, young people who have difficulties with eating and swallowing (Dysphagia), are provided with highly effective support. Cooking occasionally forms one of the evening activities, where young people are involved with cooking their own tea to develop their independence skills. Care staff are fully trained in medication administration and this is professionally carried out and robustly audited on a regular basis to support the young people's safety. The school works extremely well with differing health professionals, often additionally supporting the young people's families to ensure that there is a communal awareness of the best ways to work together.

The residential provision is of a good standard, meeting the needs of the young people well with specialist equipment such as appropriate hoists and beds being in place to support their residential experience. A separate and well equipped flat supports those that are soon to leave the school, to develop self help and independence skills.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements for keeping pupils safe are outstanding. Young people's safety is at the heart of their care within residence and they state that they feel safe when they stay. The school has a highly organised and proactive health and safety team. They revisit risk assessments and necessary checks to ensure that these are all up to date and appropriate. Risk assessments relating to residential pupils are updated in line with changes in their behaviours to promote the most effective way of ensuring their safety.

Arrangements for the recruitment of new staff are very well organised. Staff involved with recruitment have all completed training in safer recruitment to further support the safety of the pupils.

Safeguarding policies and practices are robust and when concerns are raised they are recorded, due consideration given to them, and acted on swiftly when required. Records show responses to events that occur within school and at young people's homes have a clear chronology of what has been done to support the young person. An inventive way of signalling safeguarding issues within school shows that this area takes a high priority. The care staff team are well aware of their responsibilities to safeguard children through regular training. Those in charge of safeguarding complete more in depth training including external courses to ensure that they are fully aware of both the local authority's responsibilities and differing agencies that are able to offer additional support.

Young people are aware of the importance of positive behaviour within school and residence. Young people are made aware of issues relating to bullying and how to respond to it. Information is accessible to them if they wish to raise any concerns relating to the ways that others treat them in residence. Young people state that they are really happy in residence, 'The staff are

always there to help you out if you need any help or someone to talk to'.

The staff have not had to use restraints since the last inspection, although consideration has been given to additional training in this area. Staff are extremely skilled at diffusing any problematic behaviours between young people and specific behaviour plans are put in place for individual young people if this is necessary.

The school now has a policy relating to young people who go missing from the school. No such incidents have occurred at the school.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the provision is outstanding due to the effective way that all systems are monitored and developed to support young people. The school has a strong and well established leadership team that are well aware of the young people's needs and how these are being responded to. Residence is seen as a central part of the school's provision and there are effective and productive links between the school and care areas. Regular monitoring is completed to ensure that all recording systems are being updated on a regular basis and external visits are completed on a half termly basis by experienced and knowledgeable individuals to promote an objective view of the care provided.

Policies and procedures relevant to the residential provision are examined and refreshed on a regular basis to ensure that they are in line with current care practice. No complaints have been received regarding residence although there is an appropriate procedure in place to respond to these if required.

The staff team is made up of a wealth of experienced and trained individuals who present as positive role models to the young people. There are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the young people and they feel well supported by the management through regular supervisions. Annual performance management of staff helps to ensure that staff are always thinking of new ways that they can support the young people. Staff state that there is a constant dialogue between staff relating to how differing pupils' needs can be responded to, sometimes making supervision less necessary. An excellent range of training is offered to staff to make sure that they are fully up to date with current care processes

Staff promote differing communication systems with the young people to ensure that all of those in residence have a say in the running of the provision. An effective resident's council has put forwards suggestions relating to residence that have been responded to by the management team such as activities and menu development.

The provision is constantly being improved to move forward the service for the young people. The residential development plan is detailed and shows that a range of further improvements are in place to enhance the provision.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138094
Social care unique reference number	SC006451
DfE registration number	856/7003

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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr D Bateson
Date of previous boarding inspection	20/02/2012
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