

Saxon Hill

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

Inspection dates	10/07/2014	
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

- The residential experience, whether it be through an extended day or through over-night residence enables the young people who use the Saxon Hill 'sleep over club' to expand their experience and to develop their social interaction skills. This has a significant impact upon their personal development and quality of life. Children show consideration and respect for each other and relationships between them and the staff were observed as being excellent.
- The 'sleep over club' is clearly a central part of the overall school, which supports and enhances the learning that takes part there. Activities undertaken are primarily designed to be fun and to entertain, but their educational value, in the broadest sense of the word, should not be discounted. The 'sleep over club' provides a safe haven in which young people are given the opportunity to grow outside of the confines of their family unit. They get the opportunity, to learn to share, to be patient and to help others and by so doing they learn to be more independent, self-reliant and out-going, they also get to laugh a lot and to share new exciting experiences.
- The residential experience is clearly valued, not only by the pupils who use the sleep over club, but also by the parents and the social workers, involved with them. All are unanimous in their praise for the quality of care their children receive and for the dedication and hard work of the staff team. Parents value the service they receive and clearly identify that their children's lives are enhanced by the experience and that they grow in confidence and develop new skills both social and practical. Parents feel that they are invited to be equal partners in the process, that staff at the 'sleep over club' understand their anxieties and are always prepared to go the extra mile to ensure that these are accommodated and alleviated, they are not marginalised, their input is both valued and respected.
- Care planning for each pupil is highly personalised and is of the highest quality. Experienced, motivated and well trained staff have a thorough understanding of each

pupils different and complex needs. Pupils are treated as individuals, their personalities and different characters are recognised and they are encouraged to express themselves.

- Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and are well known and understood, by all staff and pupils, safety is outstanding. Senior managers understand their responsibilities within the wider safeguarding framework, which helps to ensure that pupils receive a fully integrated, all-encompassing service. Pupils state that they feel safe and happy when staying 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 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.
- The leadership and management of the 'sleep over club' is outstanding. The club forms an important part of the whole school structure and fully compliments the education component of the school. Excellent leadership is provided by the senior staff team. They have the expertise, skills and knowledge to effectively manage the service. Staff have high aspirations for the children's and have created with in the 'sleep over club' a nurturing environment that supports their development and celebrates their achievements.

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

Inspection team

Trevor Hall

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this 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 91 pupils on roll of which 39 currently access overnight residential provision one night per week.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils accessing the schools residential resource, the 'sleep over club' continue to be outstanding. Pupils benefit from a highly supportive and inclusive specialist service that is tailored to the age, ability and special needs of the young people that use it. The 'sleep over club' experience provides pupils with a variety of social and personal situations, which are very difficult to replicate with a family unit. It provides young people with the opportunity to develop their independence and to grow in confidence. They make significant individual progress, in a wide range of areas that improve both their personal development and social skills, while having fun spending time with their friends. One parent commented that her child, through attending has "acquired lots of really useful habits, which he uses at home".

The 'sleep over club', measurably increases pupil's social skills and widens their range of 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 their complex medical needs and physical disabilities. Young people are helped to develop their independence and communication skills in the residential provision through involvement in the clubs effectively planned activities programme.

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 value the skills learned, which help the young people to be more self-reliant at home and more willing to try new experiences.

The 'sleep over club' enables friends to enjoy activities together. It enables them to develop meaningful relationships outside of the confines of school and their own individual family unit. By attending the 'sleep over club' pupils take part in a wide range of age appropriate activities, access community based social facilities, such as bowling alleys, shops and restaurants. 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.

Young people learn to share, to be patient and to help others and by so doing they learn to be more independent, self-reliant and out-going, they also get to laugh a lot and to share new exiting experiences. Young people demonstrate compassion and display 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 and by so doing they develop 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 and meaningful friendships.

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 areas, sensory rooms and extensive outdoor play areas which are well supplied with 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 to support work being undertaken in school.

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. Skilled staff facilitate 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. Young people are encouraged to explore their 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, because they enjoy the social experience. The parent of one pupil commented that, "he loves sleepover, he asks every morning if he's going that day and although he says he'll miss us he says he will have fun and be back soon so don't worry about me mum". Pupils develop social skills through enjoying a well-structured residential experience. They learn patience and are encouraged to appropriately look at the needs of others rather than purely focusing on ensuring that their own needs are met. Staff provide excellent role models subtly teaching the young people through their interactions to acknowledge and celebrate achievements whilst being tolerant, supportive and respectful of each other's differences.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of care is outstanding. Young people receive a professional service that enables them to have an enjoyable and fun filled social experience, which promotes personal development and growth. Access to the 'sleep over club' is restricted to those young people who are allocated places by the local authority's admissions panel. 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 each young person.

All aspects of planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of each young person. These are focused, detailed and effectively implemented and are a major contributing factor in ensuring beneficial outcomes for the vast majority of the young people who access the service. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the young people they care for, either because they have worked with them over a long period of time, or from the excellent multi-disciplinary information they receive during the admissions process. Information is regularly updated by 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 working with young people with complex needs. Staff work effectively together and a key worker system is in place to ensure effective communication and service delivery. This holistic approach ensures that young people have easy access to specialist support with regard to: education, care, speech and language, mobility, physical and emotional health, family support and transition. Communication between the schools residential and education staff is excellent and ensures a consistency and continuity of care.

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 as part of the admissions procedure, prior to their first residential stay. Comprehensive health care plans, ensure residential staff are accurately informed of each individual young person's needs. Staff receive specific training, when young people have complex needs, that require medical competences. Traditionally these competences have been assessed by the schools own nursing staff, however, due to policy changes external to the school, this training is currently unavailable and will remain so until a proper service level agreement is in place. The school is working hard with the local authority to resolve this issue in a timely manner, however, as staff competences require updating, the school, in the interests of pupil safety, will temporarily be unable to offer residential placements to these young people. Robust risk assessments are completed in respect of manual handling and guidance and specific training is in place for staff to ensure that this is done in a safe way. As a result, young people reside in a safe 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 schools last full residential inspection and provide sufficient space for the size of the groups 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. The accommodation is well maintained and furnished to a very good standard.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

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. The school understands acutely both its responsibility to keep young people safe and the anxieties of parents in respect of their vulnerable children's welfare. It is laudable that the school is clear that it will not accommodate any young person, with in the residential provision, if the staff team do not have the required training to safely meet that child's needs. Young people are kept safe because staff have a clear understanding of what their key role and responsibilities are in terms of providing safe care and appropriate 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.

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.

There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere throughout the school and behavioural issues within the 'sleep over club' are infrequent and generally minor. Staff are skilled at managing inappropriate behaviour, role modelling positive behaviour and promoting listening, and consideration of others. Young people learn at the 'sleep over club', that other young people have needs which need to be acknowledged and accommodated, they learn to take turns and to be patient and to share. 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.

No formal complaint has been raised since the last inspection, however, the home's record of compliments and endorsements continues to grow, as professionals, parents and young people choose to express their satisfaction with the care provided and the progress young people have made by their attendance. 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 commented 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 difficulties and 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'. Staff are very aware that staying overnight at the 'sleep over club' 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 are individual and 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 by so doing become more self-assured and confident in expressing preference and choice.

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, however, staff turnover is very low, which adds to the consistency of both care and experience. These employment procedures ensure all staff employed complete the necessary recruitment checks and are deemed suitable to work with young people before being deployed in the school. The school ensures staff practice is in line with the most recent guidance by sending key staff on appropriate safer recruitment training.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the residential provision within Saxon Hill is outstanding. The 'sleep over club' forms an integral and important part of the school structure and fully complements the school's education component. The head of the 'sleep over club' has all the required qualifications, skills and knowledge to effectively manage the provision. She is effective, experienced and provides excellent leadership. The school's leadership and management team have extremely high aspirations for children's development and are committed to creating, with the 'sleep over club', a supportive culture which enables young people to succeed. Young people are central to all decisions in respect of the running of the 'sleep over club' as such they make and make outstanding progress.

The staff team that is deployed within the 'sleep over club' is extremely stable and has within it a wealth of experience and knowledge, this helps create a consistency of both care and expectation. 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, to ensure that all their needs are met.

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, which was a fully integrated inspection, conducted with education colleagues. One area for improvement was identified on the previous inspection, which related to ensuring that the recording of pre-employment checks and vetting systems are uniform and consistent. Records checked indicated that the required degree of consistency has now been achieved and this inspection has identified no areas requiring improvement.

This school has substantial strengths and a sustained record of delivering outstanding performance and managing improvement. There is accurate and insightful evaluation of performance. The local authority and senior management team provide effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's residential provision. Regular consultation with young people, external professionals, carers and parents, 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 school's development plan.

The provision is appropriately resourced with sufficient staff on duty at the 'sleep over club' at all times. The staff team are highly committed to the provision and turnover levels are low. Children therefore benefit from consistency in approaches to their care and find it easy to make meaningful relationships with their care staff. Individual staff training needs form part of annual development meetings and staff are keen to undertake additional training to further develop their skills. Staff are well supported by management through regular formal supervision and team meetings are held regularly, this enables the sharing of good practice and the establishment of consistently high expectations.

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	124520
Social care unique reference number	SC038728
DfE registration number	860/7039

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	Mixed
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr Jon Thickett
Date of previous boarding inspection	18/09/2013
Telephone number	01543 414892
Email address	headteacher@saxonhill.staffs.sch.uk

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