

# Langham Oaks

School Road, Langham, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5PA

## Inspection dates

20/01/2016 to 22/01/2016

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement 3**

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision requires improvement because

- There are shortfalls against the National Minimum Standards. The shortfalls have not undermined young people's safety but have the potential to do so if not addressed. Many of the shortfalls are in relation to management and leadership.
- Shortfalls relate to risk assessments, placement plans, maintaining up to date policies and procedures, training for staff, providing annual appraisals, the quality and monitoring of some records, and monitoring reports
- The school handles safeguarding concerns appropriately. External professionals speak positively about the way in which the residential provision has dealt with these concerns. However, unchecked, the shortcomings have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school.
- The young people make progress compared to their starting points. They have improved their independence skills, have increased their educational attendance and have made progress in relation to their reading.
- Feedback from families and young people is positive. Families emphasise the impact the school has in terms of increased independence skills and the opportunities to socialise. The young people enjoy attending the residential provision. They access a range of internal and external leisure activities. These enable young people to experience new opportunities.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

### **The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

#### **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**

The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care). (National Minimum Standard 3.6)

Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Where children are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls. (National Minimum Standard 5.1)

A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (National Minimum Standard 12.6)

The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1. (National Minimum Standard 13.7)

The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate. (National Minimum Standard 13.9)

All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (National Minimum Standard 19.2)

All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (National Minimum Standard 19.6)

Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (National Minimum Standard 20.2)

Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the head teacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. Monitoring reports should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection. (National Minimum Standard 20.3)

The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (National Minimum Standard 21.1)

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

Undertake an audit of which young people have experienced a residential fire drill and routinely record this information when a drill takes place.

Improve the recording of the verification checks of applicant's references.

Ensure that records of any incident when a young person is considered missing or absent are comprehensive and accurately recorded.

Improve the décor of the residential environment.

## **Information about this inspection**

One inspector undertook the inspection over three days. The inspector contacted the school at 1030 on the first day of inspection and the inspection started within two and a half hours of this contact. Inspection activity included discussions with young people, residential staff, the head teacher and residential manager as well as parents, external professionals and social workers of residential pupils and a tour of the premises. Documents checked include case files, placement plans, monitoring reports and policies and procedures.

## **Inspection team**

Ashley Hinson

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Langham Oaks is a residential special school with academy status. The school was previously part of Ramsden Hall residential special school. Situated on the outskirts of Colchester, 28 pupils reside at the school for between 2 and 4 nights a week. The school caters for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is the first welfare inspection of the residential provision since registration as an academy in April 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement**

The young people are not at immediate risk from safeguarding concerns arising from the care they receive. However, there are a number of shortfalls against the National Minimum Standards. For example, risk assessments lack depth and do not adequately explore potential issues arising from the use of dormitories. Up to date policies and procedures are not in place to support healthcare arrangements, and do not reflect the relevant guidance.

The school has experienced a number of challenges since registration, and these have impacted upon the capacity of the leaders and managers of the service to improve and develop the residential provision. They have not sufficiently addressed a number of known issues. This includes undertaking annual appraisals and ensuring staff enrol on the requisite training courses. Monitoring arrangements have improved but are not rigorous enough. As a result, they do not contribute towards improvements.

Relationships in the school are generally good. Young people are encouraged to develop constructive relationships with staff and they talk positively about the support they receive. Interactions between young people are boisterous but generally respectful. There have been very few incidents of negative behaviour within the residential provision. A young person said: 'The people in school are like family, they become family.'

The young people benefit from attending the residential provision. They make progress in terms of school attendance and academic achievement. This progress is monitored through the schools data system. Parents and young people themselves report an increase in the young people's independence skills, citing cooking as a consistent example. A parent said: 'He is just a better kid for going there.'

The young people consistently report enjoying residential life and have engaged in a range of activities over time. The activities are a key pull factor in young people wanting to board. The staff regularly consult the young people about activities and meetings take place to ascertain their views.

The residential provision is an integral part of the school and works in partnership with other elements of the school, with parents and carers, as well as with external agencies, to support young people. Feedback from safeguarding professionals is encouraging. One professional spoke positively about the engagement that has taken place and said: 'The residential manager is easy to talk to, he provided information and was responsive to advice. It was a very positive experience from a social care point of view.'

### The quality of care and support

**Requires improvement**

Placement plans identify health needs, cultural needs, and leisure needs. One placement plan was out of date. Although staff are aware of the changes in the young person's health needs, the inaccurate information poses a risk. The healthcare arrangements do

not include a clear system of training for staff who administer medication. Managers have not assessed staff competency to do this. This does not ensure comprehensive oversight to assure safe administration.

There has been no formal, comprehensive assessment of risk in relation to the sleeping arrangements. The night time risk assessments are inadequate. They offer little identification, analysis or response to potential risk. Overall, the accommodation is of variable quality. Some areas of the building require attention. The young people report that they like the building. However, the issues impact on the homeliness of the environment. Leaders and managers recognise this and improving the décor forms part of the development plan.

The school has recently introduced a system known as team around the group. This encourages a joined up cooperative approach to the provision of care across the educational, pastoral and residential elements of the school. This helps staff understand the holistic needs of the young people. They interact well with them and have warm relationships. Young people speak highly of the staff. There is a sensitive approach to new residential pupil's inductions. The young people are aware of who to contact if they have concerns. They are in regular contact with their families during their stays.

The young people benefit from the pastoral support on offer. A young person said: 'If you need help you just come to the staff and they help you.' Families and professionals are also positive. A parent said: 'The residential team is great. He has a fantastic rapport with them. The residential manager is great from a parent's point of view and is very in touch with the young people's needs.'

The young people have access to a choice of nourishing meals. They also learn to cook for themselves. Parents and professionals highlight the positive impact this has on the young people. It provides them with new skills they have been able to transfer to life outside the school.

House meetings take place and young people report that staff listen to them and take their views into account. They have input into discussions about the range of activities. They benefit from access to a wide range of social and recreational activities, both internal and external. The staff talk with passion about engaging young people in activities and how the experiences meet individual needs. The young people access activities in the local community. This includes attending football matches, going swimming and learning to dive. Many of these activities promote health benefits.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

### **Requires improvement**

The inspection has identified some shortfalls in relation to safeguarding. These primarily relate to record keeping. The young people report feeling safe, professionals are positive about the way in which the school deals with safeguarding issues and families have no concerns.

The school follows safe recruitment guidelines. However, the detail of reference verification is not clearly captured within the personnel files. This does not ensure consistency and transparency when checking potential staff.

There have been very few incidents where young people have gone missing. However, when this has occurred the records are not fully completed. Times are not always accurate, and the record has not always shown the duration of the incident. Physical intervention in the residential provision is rare. However, regular monitoring of the incidents does not take place and there is some missing information within the records. This does not provide a clear account.

Regular fire tests and drills take place. However, the records do not show which young people were involved in a drill. As such, this information is not readily available and does not inform risk planning. These shortcomings have not resulted in the young people being at risk but unchecked have the potential to do so.

The young people say they feel safe in the residential provision. They know how to complain and are able to identify staff they would talk to if they are unhappy. They report that staff listen to them.

The staff are clear about the procedures to follow if they have concerns. Where safeguarding concerns have been identified, they have been shared with appropriate professionals. Written records of incidents are sufficient. External professionals speak positively about the way in which the residential provision has dealt with these concerns. A social worker said: 'I am satisfied that they reacted appropriately to the incident. They took action to safeguard the young person and other children.'

The consequences log is comprehensive, it shows the nature of the incident, and the young people complete an educational consequence. As a result, the young people have an opportunity to reflect upon incidents in a meaningful and supportive way.

There have been few recorded incidents of bullying. The young people report that this is not a significant issue. They say that when it does happen staff address their concerns. A significant number of young people are trained as anti-bullying ambassadors. They speak with empathy and insight about the potential impact of bullying. Young people were involved in a prize winning proposal for the development of an anti-bullying application and have attended a number of prestigious events as a result. The staff are clear that they challenge discriminatory language and records support this.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Requires improvement**

This inspection identified a number of breaches of National Minimum Standards in relation to leadership and management. Whilst the leaders and managers have the necessary experience to lead the provision, they recognise the need for improvement.

Independent monitoring visits take place but the majority of visits are announced. There is limited evidence of the reports being shared with, or scrutinised by governors. In the majority of visits there were no checks of the physical intervention logs. The visits do not provide challenge. As a result, they do not assist managers to identify weaknesses. Consequently, they do not contribute to the improvement of the service.

The staff receive regular supervision, which they describe as supportive. However,

annual appraisals have not taken place. The staff have access to training and development opportunities. These include safeguarding updates. Staff have not enrolled on level three qualification courses within the requisite time frame. There is also no handbook for staff. As a result, there are gaps in the support available for staff to fulfil their roles.

There is a lack of up to date policies and procedures to inform practice. Leaders and managers are updating a number of these. Some information on the school website is out of date and other documents do not open. There are three versions of the medication policy in use on the school site. This increases the likelihood of mistakes occurring.

Staff work together across the school to develop a stable and consistent approach. Despite the issues noted during the inspection, staff report that they are well led and managed. Leaders, managers, staff and young people are comfortable in each other's company. The young people clearly have a good relationship with the residential manager, who makes time to be with them. When the young people raise concerns, managers respond appropriately.

External professionals report good working relationships with the residential provision. A social worker said: 'The residential manager was very good at communicating and we had many meetings with the team.' Families speak positively about the quality of the provision and the communication between the provision and themselves. They have faith in the service and articulate the impact it has on the young people and their family as a whole.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	1213822
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	1213822
<b>DfE registration number</b>	141512

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	28
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Male
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms. Emma Paramor
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	N/A
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 271571
<b>Email address</b>	admin@Langhamoaks.co.uk

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