

# The New Eccles Hall School

The New Eccles Hall School, Eccles, Norwich NR16 2NZ

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|--|-----------------------------|----------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 28/09/2016 to 30/09/2016    |          |
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b> | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| 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                     | Good                        | 2        |

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision requires improvement because

- There are five unmet national minimum standards, which have the potential to impact on young people's welfare, health and safety.
- Risk assessments for the sleeping accommodation are not recorded and some incident logs lack detail.
- Written agreements for adults living on the school site do not specify all the required elements.
- Menus do not provide an adequate choice of healthy options at evening meals.
- The school keeps young people adequately safe and supervised.
- The management and reporting of safeguarding concerns and allegations are good.
- The accommodation has improved and planned refurbishment continues.
- The impact of the residential experience adds to the personal and social development and achievement of young people. Young people benefit from being at the school and make good academic progress.
- Management of the residential provision is good. Staff have high aspirations and expectations for young people, resulting in a drive to improve standards.

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

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 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 eight years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls. (NMS 5.1)
- All children, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety. (NMS 8.1)
- The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with children, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with children. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence. (NMS 14.3)
- The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to residential provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). (NMS 18.2)

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

There were no areas identified on this inspection.

## Information about this inspection

The welfare inspection of the three boarding houses making up the residential provision was undertaken by two inspectors following a notice period of three hours. The inspection activities included: meeting with matrons, catering staff, senior managers, the managing director, staff, children and young people; scrutiny of policies and the electronic record base; and observation of practice and evening routines. Parents gave feedback directly to inspectors through telephone discussions and email.

## Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

Lead social care inspector

Trish Palmer

Social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

The New Eccles Hall School is an independent residential special school for pupils aged from four to 20 years. Residential accommodation is offered to pupils aged eight years and above. There are 126 young people on roll, 26 of whom reside at the school on a weekly or full-time basis.

The residential accommodation is provided in three houses within the grounds. The school is situated in rural Norfolk, between Norwich and Thetford. It caters for young people with social and communication difficulties and associated behavioural difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

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

**Requires improvement**

The quality of the residential provision has improved, although work remains to meet the five unmet national minimum standards raised. Children's and young people's safety is adequately managed. Safeguarding systems work well and are routinely implemented by the staff. The residential areas run smoothly with an agreed understanding of the house rules. However, healthy food choices in the evening are not offered and the recording of risk assessments and follow up to incidents are poor. There was one aspect of written accommodation agreements for adults that was missing.

However, there is a strong drive and commitment to addressing the shortfalls and exceeding the national minimum standards. Aspiration and drive to meet these are evident. Staff work hard to implement change and improve the provision within their allocated resources and budgets.

The quality of induction and settling-in at the school is a key strength. Children and young people new to the school are welcomed and supported. Staff go above and beyond to reassure them, and overcome any potential barriers and difficulties. Parents report induction as good. One new parent said, 'I have been overwhelmed by how caring all the staff have been. As a result, he has settled in extremely well. It's early days but we are absolutely delighted with all aspects of the school.'

Children and young people commented that they are happy in the school and they could name staff that they could speak to if they were worried or upset. They have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of activities and are supported to build and maintain positive friendships. All those spoken to said that contacting home was no issue. The school have supported positive friendships outside school through weekly sports training in the local community and external sleepovers. This supports children and young people to maintain positive relationships outside their immediate peer group.

Staff work jointly with parents and carers regarding unwanted behaviour while supporting the children involved and working to resolve the issues. Children and young people spoken to say that staff take bullying seriously and report, 'Staff will always sort it out.' All said that they could name several staff they would speak to if they felt that they were being bullied. A parent said, 'I wholeheartedly support the boarding facilities at New Eccles Hall School. They are aware of all of the children and what they need. I am aware that there may always be issues but am confident that they will speak with me as required.'

Children and young people make good progress academically. Teaching and residential staff work closely together in monitoring behaviours and progression. Residential and teaching staff consistently support the children and young people to complete homework during preparation time. The majority of the children and young people have reached the predicted grades for their GCSEs, with some obtaining higher grades than expected.

Parents receive school reports electronically and have the opportunity to comment on them. A portal enables them access to any achievements or concerns. Parents are generally happy and eagerly provided positive testimonies. One parent spoken to said, 'Yes, if it wasn't for the school, she wouldn't be in education. She was out of education before and since being at the school has been able to access a full curriculum and many

new opportunities.'

### **The quality of care and support**

### **Requires improvement**

The school is situated in large well-maintained grounds. There are ample opportunities for children and young people to benefit from sporting activities with grassed pitches and hardcourt areas. A large climbing centre with high ropes and climbing walls provides a safe environment to take planned risks and develop new skills. Staff provide fit and active role models, enthusiastically running sports fixtures, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and trips further afield including Peru. This gives children and young people exciting opportunities and experience of different cultures and communities.

Accommodation is clean, homely and orderly. Replacement of furniture and showers has improved the facilities. Bedrooms are personalised and staff consider and promote privacy. The senior accommodation has new beds and furniture is bright and personalised. Sleeping accommodation is well organised to ensure compatible room sharing, although the risk assessments are not recorded and therefore there is no evidence of this work.

There has been no improvement with the food since the last inspection. Healthy evening meal alternatives are not offered. Food lacks international flavour and there are no lighter options at tea time. Heavy, meat-based meals are followed by high sugar desserts. The presentation of some food is institutional and unappealing. This does not promote healthy eating or educate children and young people about balanced diets.

Medication storage and administration are robust. Medication is appropriately recorded and stored. Children and young people are registered with the local general practitioner who monitors household medication. The matrons have a good relationship with the local surgery and use them for advice. Controlled drugs are stored recorded and administered appropriately and safely. This supports the health needs of children and young people.

Individual health records are being completed by the matrons. These include medical conditions, actions, medication and a plan for managing complex illnesses such as diabetes.

Parents and carers contact the school using a wide range of social media. Improvements in the internet support better communication systems. Parents, children and young people cite communication with the school as easy and trouble-free.

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

### **Requires improvement**

Risks are identified and managed adequately. The majority of children and young people adhere to the rules that support their personal safety and welfare. A system to profile each individual's vulnerability, using a score, is carried out for all pupils identifying potential concerns. This helps staff to prevent incidents.

There are no missing from school incidents of any concern. Visitors report to reception on the gate and are chaperoned while on the school site. Movement between school

and boarding houses is managed using a signing out system prompted by staff. This encourages children and young people to take responsibility for their personal safety. Failure to sign out results in reduced free time.

Behaviour is generally very good. Despite this, rare incidents can be serious and impact on how children and young people feel. Feedback from a number of children and young people conclude that there is a zero tolerance approach to bullying and staff are quick and decisive in taking action. There is a culture of self-regulation and trust in one another and staff. So although this does occur, there are strong responses and a clear message that intimidation or discrimination are not tolerated.

Physical restraint is seldom used and has to meet clear criteria that staff identify. There are no instances of this being used in the residential provision although staff are trained in a recognised technique and de-escalation strategy. This ensures that incidents would be managed safely using appropriate holds.

The school has managed a number of allegations in relation to three separate incidents. Allegations are referred to the designated safeguarding officer without delay and feedback from the local authority designated officers involved is positive. The designated lead for safeguarding has acted responsively and quickly. Records demonstrate the sharing of information with relevant professionals, parents and carers. The management and reporting of concerns demonstrates that all staff are aware of their individual responsibility to safeguard and whistleblow. Investigations into allegations are robust and records show a detailed chronology of actions taken to safeguard pupils and ensure that a professional code of conduct is demonstrated by all staff.

The policies intended to safeguard pupils are regularly reviewed and meet requirements. However, the bullying policy is not fully implemented. Incidents of bullying are recorded electronically but information on the system is not always clear regarding the event and there is not enough evidence that incidents are always followed up and recorded appropriately by staff. This means that strategies to prevent occurrences may lack direction and escalation of consequences may be hard to evidence.

Children, staff and young people feel easily able to raise concerns that affect them. There are always residential staff, matrons or teaching staff on-site. In addition, there is an independent visitor and a church leader known to children and young people.

Health and safety checks are followed in line with the school's health and safety policy. Checks incorporate ensuring that the fire prevention equipment is in place and emerging maintenance issues are logged to ensure a safe environment.

A number of staff and volunteer gap students live at the school. Rigorous background checks are completed prior to commencing employment. This includes overseas volunteer gap students who work at the school for a year. A number of staff live on-site and while their terms and conditions are set out in an agreement, this omits to detail the safeguarding clause in terms of reporting any convictions or incidents to the designated safeguarding lead. This could result in staff undergoing criminal investigation without the school's knowledge. This was amended immediately for staff to sign and return.

The residential provision is integral to the school and managed as such. There is a dedicated and efficient head of pastoral care who manages the residential provision alongside a part-time teaching role. The residential staff have teaching responsibilities and the combination of roles enables good sharing of information. This provides a seamless approach which supports continuity of care and support for individuals.

Staff are assigned to the boarding houses and evening duties are supported by academic staff and volunteer gap students. This ensures that there are enough adults to supervise children and young people. A signing out system works well and enables staff to monitor the whereabouts of children and young people.

Staff receive regular inset training while undertaking mandatory level 3 training to equip them for their roles. All staff have termly supervision and annual appraisal of their performance. Supervision records demonstrate that staff are held accountable and expected to reflect on their roles and ensure that their practice demonstrates professionalism and commitment to the role.

Monitoring of the provision is routinely undertaken. The reports generally focus on improvements and previous shortfalls identified. The senior management team has identified that these could provide a more robust overview and a new interim monitoring visitor has been appointed from the senior management team with a view to finding an external visitor. This will provide an objective critique.

Leaders and managers have sound knowledge of the areas that require improvement. There is a willingness to better the facilities and upgrade the accommodation. The head of pastoral care and headteacher are aware of the weaknesses and have worked hard to address the shortfalls raised last year. Staff manage the balance between pastoral care and teaching commitments, there is strong commitment and focus to get this right.

Relationships with parents and carers are generally good. Parents cite communication as strong and say that staff are approachable and responsive. One parent said, 'The staff are so dedicated throughout the whole school and without their dedication the school would not be a success. The staff regularly engage with parents if needed and are available to listen if we call them.' Feedback from a number of parents was extremely positive.

The school has failed to classify a complaint since the last inspection, despite both a pupil and a parent raising a concern. These have been responded to while they have not been categorised as such. This does not provide a transparent log which makes the number and nature of complaints unclear.

Overall, the school has worked hard to address previously identified shortfalls and demonstrates commitment to continue to improve the residential provision.



## 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

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|--|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 121229   |
| <b>Social care unique reference number</b> | SC027660 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 926/6041 |

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>           | 122                          |
| <b>Gender of boarders</b>                   | Mixed                        |
| <b>Age range of boarders</b>                | 3 to 19                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                          | Mr Thornton                  |
| <b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b> | 14/09/2015                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                     | 01953 887217                 |
| <b>Email address</b>                        | headmaster@neweccleshall.com |

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