

# Ash Field Academy

Ash Field School, Broad Avenue, LEICESTER LE5 4PY

## Inspection dates

24/01/2017 to 26/01/2017

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

**Outstanding** **1**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding 1

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Young people make exceptional progress academically and socially because of the residential experience. An in-depth analysis of data by leaders and managers clearly identifies this positive impact, highlighting greater progress for residential pupils towards their end-of-year targets when compared with pupils of a similar profile who do not access the residential provision.
- The development of social and independence skills is a real strength of the provision. Crucially, these transfer across varied settings, including school, residential provision, home and community. This supports young people to develop.
- The student council is outstanding. Young people with varied and complex needs play an equal part in sharing views and concerns. Young people take responsibility for carrying out actions from the council.
- Safeguarding systems are excellent. A review of policies by a governor with professional experience of such matters has ensured that documentation takes into account national issues while remaining relevant to the complex needs of the young people at this school.
- Motivational and inspirational leaders ensure that the residential provision is at the very heart of the whole school. Governors have an extensive range of skills and experience, bringing expertise in many areas.
- The two previous recommendations have been met. There are no failures to meet national minimum standards and one recommendation for improvement resulting

from this inspection.

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

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

- The care manager or nurse to carry out medication audits to add a further level of scrutiny to the medication process.

## Information about this inspection

One inspector conducted a three-day inspection, announced on the morning of the first day. The inspector visited the residential accommodation, and made observations of the care and support received by young people. The inspector reviewed a selection of policies, procedures, files and records. Discussions with young people and care staff took place throughout the inspection. The inspector met with the leadership and management team and with a group of parents, and spoke with professionals working closely with the service.

## Inspection team

Judith Longden

Lead social care inspector

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

This is an academy residential special school with 147 pupils. The residential area is a dedicated area within the main school that caters for up to 18 pupils at any time. Pupils have learning and/or physical disabilities and associated sensory and health needs. There are currently 33 boys and girls using the residential service, usually for one or two nights a week. A few pupils stay for an extended school day, which includes tea and subsequent activities in the residential area, before going home.

The residential provision was last inspected in February 2016.

## Inspection judgements

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

**Outstanding**

Young people make excellent progress and the residential experience clearly enhances this, providing a range of opportunities that they otherwise would not have. Progress is evident in education, social skills, confidence and independence. This progress is transferable to the home and community settings, which is crucial to the ongoing development of the young people. The monitoring and analysis of this progress are outstanding. In particular, the achievement files provide a clear picture of each young person's progress towards their targets.

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff and each other, and thoroughly enjoy the residential experience. The inclusive approach to social time and activities is a particular strength. Young people who have diverse disabilities enjoy taking part in activities such as football and other team games, and clearly have a lot of fun. This provides healthy exercise and movement, and a time for socialising and making friends. The development of social skills is a key benefit of the residential experience, especially for those who may be socially isolated at home.

Some young people join local sports and community clubs because of experiencing an activity for the first time during their residential stay. For example, following an introduction to archery, one young person joined a local archery group and has since performed at the national junior games.

Education attainment is enhanced with core targets duplicated across school and care. All staff working in care and education understand the individual targets for young people, and work together to provide opportunities for constant learning. Activities and games involving recognition of colours and shapes and use of numbers mean that young people continue to learn while enjoying activities with their friends.

Young people participate in a range of activities, such as preparing meals, cooking, cleaning, and sorting laundry. This helps them build a range of independence skills. Parents comment on how these transfer to the home, with their children taking on more responsibility. One parent commented that she would never have thought her child could be responsible for using a kettle and making a cup of tea, but now the child regularly does so.

The voice of young people is a real strength. They share their views in a number of ways, including using regular questionnaires. The combining of the school council with the residential council last year has meant a much stronger student voice. Young people with varying and complex needs fully participate. They are responsible for highlighting any concerns, issues or requests, identifying the solutions, and taking action to address these. Their views make a difference. For example, the choice of food at breakfast and teatime has improved, additional water dispensers are now available in the residential setting, and young people access more computers during their stay. These examples demonstrate that young people's views are heard and taken seriously and they are fully involved in making improvements and decision making across the whole school site.

Young people have the opportunity to stay in residence usually for one or two nights a week. Older young people benefit from a stay in the 'independence flat' that provides additional opportunities for learning independence skills and more space to be away from the larger group. Extended days give young people the opportunity to participate in the activities and mealtimes offered without staying overnight. This experience is also used to enable young people new to residential to build confidence and make friends before staying for their first night. Everyone works hard to ensure that new young people feel welcomed and confident about staying overnight. For example, one young person during the inspection explained how he had volunteered to change bedrooms for the night, so instead of sharing with his friends he would share with the new young person, helping him to settle.

Staff clearly understand the complex and wide-ranging needs of young people because of detailed planning and care documentation, their extensive knowledge of individual young people, and their positive relationships with them. Care plans now include all information concerning welfare and emotional well-being of young people, which meets a recommendation made at the last inspection. Shared targets for achievement across the whole school team provide a consistent approach for young people. Regular communication between school and care identifies where residential staff can offer additional support or opportunities to help young people achieve.

Contact between parents and all staff is excellent, with regular updates provided on the progress of their child and the opportunity for parents to attend training workshops, such as understanding internet safety. This helps build excellent relationships between parents and the school, and provides a consistent approach for supporting the young people. Parents comment on the care provided, for example stating that staff are: 'unreal, completely excellent'.

Highly effective partnerships with a range of health professionals ensure excellent support for a very broad range of complex health and care needs. The recent addition of further nursing staff is a major boost for the staff team as they care for an increasing number of young people who have profound and multiple learning disabilities. A range of professionals support staff in school and residential, including speech and language therapists and a dietician. They offer services based within the school, meaning that students miss less learning time when attending appointments and parents have a single venue to attend.

Medication is managed by confident and well-trained staff. Records of the administration of medication identify two staff present at all times. Staff check the preceding record on every occasion to ensure that the correct medication has been administered. However, there is currently no management audit of this process which would offer further quality assurance.

Dietary needs are well catered for by staff who clearly understand the individuals' eating and drinking plans. The food provided throughout the day is nourishing and healthy, with options for vegetarians and lighter meals available. Fruit is readily available at mealtimes and in the residential provision.

Movement and exercise are encouraged and tailored to each individual young person, and progression in this area is palpable. The school has recently obtained recognition for its implementation of a programme of movement, and staff hope this culminates in the school becoming a centre of excellence in the future.

The residential area provides ample space for sports and activities such as cooking. A comfortable lounge area provides opportunities for young people to participate in board games, listen to music, watch television or use a computer. Young people have access to a telephone, which they can use to make calls in private or with assistance if needed. They have a range of adults that they feel comfortable talking to, including the independent visitor and a counsellor. This means that they can share their concerns with adults outside of the school environment. The increase in hours of the counsellor to include daily availability can only serve to improve this situation even further.

One young person summed up their views of the residential provision, stating: 'I love the staff and the other young people. The food is good. I like doing sport. I love it here.'

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

**Outstanding**

Excellent safeguarding systems ensure that young people are safe when they are away from home. A recent review into the already robust policies and procedures by a governor with professional experience in such areas has resulted in robust policies covering the varied national perspectives while remaining pertinent to the unique nature of the needs of the young people. The compilation of all the relevant policies and procedures into a safeguarding pack ensures that all staff, especially those new to the school, have easy access to all the applicable safeguarding information to keep young people protected.

All staff clearly understand the individual vulnerabilities of each young person, their roles in keeping young people safe, and the process for alerting others if they have any concerns or if disclosures are made. Excellent liaison with the local area safeguarding team ensures that any concerns are thoroughly considered and investigated appropriately.

Staff are aware of a range of safeguarding issues, including sexual exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, and internet safety. Training, access to resources and up-to-date information provide staff with the knowledge to keep young people safe. The designated safeguarding lead in the school attends network meetings that provide a forum for sharing practice and useful resources.

Keeping young people safe is carefully balanced with allowing them the freedom to

experience new things, develop new skills, and take appropriate risks. This is managed through careful risk assessment and staff vigilance. The use of mobile phones is not banned within the residential setting. Instead, young people discuss the risks involved and staff monitor their use of phones, helping young people to learn responsibility and gain confidence to use their phones safely.

There have been no complaints made by parents, young people or professionals, no missing from care episodes, and no bullying concerns, indicating that young people feel safe here. Physical intervention is not used within this school.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and stems from the very ethos of the school. The use of rewards is common practice, with no sanctions used in residential since the last inspection. Staff training focuses on what constitutes unwanted behaviour and its triggers, and what staff can do to support young people to behave positively. As a result, there are very low incident rates of unacceptable behaviour. Staff invest in young people's emotional health and well-being, with opportunities to participate in yoga and increased access to a counsellor.

Robust health and safety procedures, such as regular audits, safety checks and frequent fire drills, ensure that young people are safe. Recruitment of staff is robust. A thorough pre-induction and induction process ensures that the right staff are employed to work with the young people. A parent commented that, 'There is nobody I would let look after my child other than here, confident we are leaving them safe.'

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

**Outstanding**

The principal, head of care, senior team, staff and governors are passionate about the residential provision and the role that it plays in enhancing and improving the lives of young people. It is viewed as an integral part of the whole school, at its very heart. The provision is extremely well managed by an inspirational, motivational and experienced head of care, whose enthusiasm permeates throughout the staff team.

The two recommendations for improvement from the last inspection have been met. The independent visitor's monitoring report provides more evaluation and reflection, and the files for young people now include reference to any additional emotional well-being needs.

In a culture of continuous improvement, a number of other changes have been made. These include the extended availability of a counsellor, the commissioning of a full-time paediatric nurse and two healthcare assistants, improved recording of achievement and progress, the creation of a fully accessible kitchen for residential students, and the introduction of a 'young people only' table at teatime to encourage independence.

Staff and leaders work effectively in partnership with an extensive range of other professionals in areas such as health and safeguarding. Excellent links with other schools, sharing ideas and resources, enable learning and development.

The governing body is a real strength, with individuals bringing a wealth of experience, expertise and range of skills, enabling the effective monitoring of young people's progress and welfare. Governors attend a wide range of training, continuously developing their skills and knowledge. The chair of governors describes how they have recently undertaken a detailed self-assessment of where they are on the 'governing journey', in order to develop a clear improvement plan as a group so that they can provide the very best governance for the school.

Highly effective monitoring identifies progress, strengths and areas of weakness. The improved monitoring by the independent visitor offers more robust challenge and rigorous questioning to the school and residential provision. The principal, head of care and governors routinely carry out detailed monitoring of the service, and surveys completed by young people and parents also inform this process. Such surveys highlight the improvements and progress for young people because of being resident.

Staff feel motivated, supported by the leaders and managers, and provide excellent care and protection for the young people. Robust and effective supervision of staff and regular appraisals of their performance identify any areas for development and strengths, and enable staff to raise any concerns. A range of training in safeguarding matters, medication, and care practice ensures that staff have the appropriate skills to care for young people. All residential staff have the required qualification, meaning that young people benefit from skilled and experienced staff.

## 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 exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact that 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>	138094
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC006451
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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>	33
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	8 to19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Booth
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	23/02/2016
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 273 7151
<b>Email address</b>	jbooth@ashfield.leicester.sch.uk

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