

# Aurora Eccles School

Eccles, Norwich NR16 2NZ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

The Aurora Eccles School is an independent residential special school for pupils aged between 4 and 20 years. Residential accommodation is offered to pupils aged eight years and above. There are 122 children and young people on roll, 15 of whom reside at the school on a weekly or full-time basis. The residential accommodation is provided in three houses in the grounds. The school is situated in rural Norfolk, between Norwich and Thetford. It caters for children and young people who have social and communication difficulties and associated behavioural difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2016.

**Inspection dates:** 26 to 28 September 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>requires improvement to be good</b>
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of previous inspection:** 28 September 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Leaders and managers have not maintained a sufficient level of oversight of the service, to ensure that the expected national minimum standards have been met.
- The quality of the accommodation is poor. Rooms have damaged walls and damaged ceilings. This conveys a lack of value and respect for the children and young people.
- The placement plans lack precision and are not developed in partnership with the children and young people or their families. There is a lack of evidence of the children's and young people's social and emotional progress.
- Records relating to safeguarding are poor. They do not provide a clear account of what has happened when a safeguarding concern has arisen, nor do they show what action has been taken to chase up any safeguarding referral.
- Staff knowledge of missing-from-school procedures and guidance is weak. There are predictable risks associated with children or young people going missing, but the nearby roads are not considered as part of the risk assessments.
- Arrangements to manage medication are not good enough. Training arrangements are insufficient and the system to monitor the medication that is on the premises is weak.
- Risk assessments are variable in their quality. Senior managers have not routinely monitored or reviewed these.
- There has been a lack of supervision and appraisal for staff.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- The children and young people are able to identify a wide range of staff with whom they can talk if they have concerns or worries.
- There are strong relationships between the children and young people and the staff.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

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

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

- 3.6 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).
- 5.4 Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them.
- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 12.8 Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and where relevant the local authority's policy, in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.
- 21.1 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.

## **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the quality of children's and young people's risk assessments is monitored and reviewed by senior managers.
- Ensure that staff chase up and record the outcome of any safeguarding referral that they make.
- Ensure that staff receive training in safeguarding children and young people who have disabilities.
- Ensure that records capture the progress that children and young people make in relation to their social, emotional and psychological development.
- Consider implementing a formal process to record when children and young people hand in their mobile devices overnight.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

The school is not providing a good quality of service to the children and young people. Although there are strong relationships between the children and young people and the staff, there is a large number of shortcomings across the service. Although these issues have not directly harmed children and young people, unchecked they have the potential to do so. The managers have some awareness of the actions that they need to take. However, the speed with which they are addressing these actions is too slow.

The quality of the residential accommodation is poor. There are long-term plans to relocate the residential accommodation. However, many of the rooms that are in use currently were damaged before the summer holidays. There is a failure to maintain basic standards in the accommodation. There is damage to walls, ceilings and doors. The children and young people recognise that the accommodation is not good enough. The poorly maintained accommodation is inconsistent with the stated aims and principles of the service, and conveys a lack of respect to the children and young people.

The children's and young people's placement plans lack precision, and they are not developed in partnership with children and young people or their families, nor are they consistently reviewed. When the plans contain actions, it is unclear how the actions will be managed. This does not provide staff with the guidance that they require to meet the children's and young people's identified needs.

The absence of effective placement plans contributes to a failure to capture fully the progress that children and young people make in relation to their emotional, social and psychological well-being. Although there is anecdotal evidence of progress, this is not routinely recorded and does not inform learning or planning. The children and young people themselves feel that they make progress. One child stated, 'I have made progress. I came here four years ago. I had low confidence, low self-esteem. I wanted to run away. I am happy and settled now. I can't describe it but I have made progress.' Another said, 'I am happy. I came here from secure. I have learned to behave well.' Recently, education leaders have begun to capture evidence about educational progress. However, this is in its infancy and cannot yet be used to demonstrate sustained progress.

The arrangements to manage medication are not good enough. There is no assessment of competence for staff to administer medication. In addition, the system to monitor the amount of medication held on site focuses only on controlled drugs. This means that there is no record of what medication is held or where.

There are strong relationships between the staff and the children and young people. The children and young people are consistently positive about the relationships that

they have with the staff. They feel that the staff know them, understand them and listen to them. There are positive relationships between the staff and the families of the children and young people.

The children and young people are given the chance to develop their independence skills. The children and young people report that, as they move through the school years, they are given increasing opportunities to expand the knowledge that they will need when they move on from the school. A child said, 'I can do a lot more. I am more independent. I can cook. I cook at home now.' Another stated, 'I can read and write so much better than I could before.'

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

The records relating to safeguarding are poor. They do not consistently identify the actions that staff take in response to concerns, nor are they consistently clear about which staff and children or young people are being referred to. As a result, it is sometimes difficult and time-consuming for key staff to gather a clear picture of what has taken place. Internal monitoring arrangements have not identified the shortcomings in the records.

Practice in relation to managing incidents of children and young people going missing from the school needs to improve. Although only one child has gone missing from the residential provision, the records relating to this incident did not contain the information that the school's procedure requires. Key safeguarding staff lack knowledge regarding statutory guidance on what to do if a child goes missing. There is insufficient understanding of the need for children and young people to have access to an independent return interview when they return from an incident of going missing. The staff are unaware of whether such an interview took place. Therefore, children's and young people's risk assessments are not informed by the content of these interviews and, when the placing authority does not facilitate such an interview, leaders and managers are not advocating for one to take place. In addition, neither the school's policy and procedure on children and young people going missing nor individual risk assessments make any reference regarding what to do if a child goes missing from the school during hours of darkness. This is despite the location of the school presenting clear risks in this area.

Individual risk assessments are variable in their quality. Leaders and managers undertake little quality assurance of the risk assessment process. As a result, the staff who complete these assessments do not receive guidance or feedback that could lead to improvements in content and consistency.

The children and young people say that they feel safe. They say that bullying is not an issue for them. The children and young people are able to identify a wide range of staff with whom they can discuss any concerns that they have.

The children and young people hand in their mobile devices to staff in the evenings.

However, there is no record made of this action. As a result, it is unclear whether children and young people consistently comply with this expectation or whether staff consistently enforce it.

The children and young people report that behaviour is well managed. One child stated, 'First they [staff] try to prevent it. Then they will intervene if that is needed. Then they follow that up with support for the person who is misbehaving and anyone who was affected by this.' The staff manage behaviour without routine recourse to physical interventions. There have been none in the residential provision since the last inspection. The children and young people are polite and respectful. Observations saw staff maintain good order through assertive communication and changes in tone.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

Leaders and managers have not maintained a sufficient level of oversight of the service. As a result, there are several unmet minimum standards.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the children's and young people's needs. However, monitoring of children's and young people's progress is not yet embedded. As such, there is some anecdotal evidence regarding progress but little in the way of data to inform planning and response.

There has been a lack of supervision for named safeguarding staff. Plans are said to be in place to introduce a new system of supervision; however, this has yet to start. The absence of regular supervision and appraisal contributes to the potential for poor practice and for poor decision-making. It also means that staff have not routinely had access to formal guidance, feedback or emotional support to carry on their role.

The staff have access to a range of training courses to assist them in their role. However, no training is currently provided in relation to safeguarding children and young people who have disabilities. This is despite there being diagnoses of a range of conditions for many of the children and young people who are accessing the school. This does not provide staff with the holistic knowledge that they require.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of the children and young people. They are passionate about the children and young people and are dedicated to meeting their needs. The children and young people, who talk with great positivity about the staff who support them, recognise this passion and dedication. The children's and young people's families and carers reinforce this positive feedback.

The service links with professionals who work with the children and young people. Senior managers offer robust challenge when they see that other agencies are not acting in the children's and young people's best interests. This challenge has resulted

in positive outcomes. However, there is limited evidence to show that staff follow up referrals made to the local authority. While the staff assert that they do this, records do not demonstrate this in practice.

Leaders and managers have a general awareness of the actions that need to be taken to make the necessary improvements. However, this awareness has not led to timely improvements. Recent monitoring visits by an independent person have offered challenge and identified areas in which improvements are needed. Acted upon, these have the potential to contribute to the significant improvements that are needed.

Leaders and managers promote a culture of inclusion and tolerance among the children and young people. As a result, children and young people who have a range of different needs co-exist relatively harmoniously in the residential provision.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC027660

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Rob Thornton

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01953 887217

**Email address:** rob.thornton@the-aurora-group.com

## **Inspector**

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017