

# Maplewell Hall

Maplewell Hall School, Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough,  
Leicestershire LE12 8QY

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Maplewell Hall School is a local authority maintained residential special school for 210 boys and girls aged 11 to 19 years. The residential provision operates from Monday to Thursday each week with an average of 16 students residing at the school on any night. The vast majority stay in residence for a maximum of two nights per half-term and stay on a rotational basis. The residential accommodation is provided in the main school building. The school is situated in Woodhouse Eaves, close to Loughborough. The school caters for students within Leicestershire who have moderate learning difficulties and autism. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2016.

**Inspection dates:** 21 to 23 November 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 13 September 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. Academic achievement is better for those using the residential provision than for their peers.
- Children learn important life skills during their stay. As well as learning independence skills, their self-esteem, confidence and resilience grow. The experience of staying in the residential provision enhances children's life opportunities.
- Children thoroughly enjoy the residential experience. They love the activities and being able to spend time with their friends. Parents agree that the residential provision has been a huge support to their family.
- The safety of children is a priority. This means that children feel safe and are safe.
- Children are helpful, respectful and behave well. They have warm and nurturing relationships with each other and with staff. Well-developed positive behaviour techniques that provide a holistic approach have meant that there have been no restraints in the school for the last year. This means that children are more focused on learning and achieving.
- Children are encouraged to have a say in all aspects of school life.
- Staff are creative and inspirational. They have developed practice that has been disseminated to other schools.
- Staff work closely with other professionals to ensure that children and their families are properly supported. The support provided has prevented safeguarding concerns escalating.
- The management team provides strong and supportive leadership. Together with governors, the managers provide robust scrutiny of the residential provision. This means that they have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses. The development plan is insightful and seeks to challenge and extend the provision.
- A parent said: 'A well-run and useful facility. Residential nights are an essential part of the development of our child in forming resilience and independence. If he was not doing this, I believe there would be longer-term developmental/independence problems that would increase his reliance on the state into late teenage/early adult years.'

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Children have an independent visitor who provides external scrutiny and offers children an independent person to talk to. However, children are not aware of who the independent person is or how to contact her.
- Staff know and understand the children very well. However, information about children is not well organised or up to date.

- Children know how to evacuate the building in the event of an emergency and staff know what extra support some children may need. However, personal emergency evacuation plans are not written with children. Undertaking this would reassure children about the extra support staff will provide them with in the event of a fire.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that children are aware of who the independent visitor is and how to contact them.
- Ensure that staff have good access to up-to-date and organised information about the health and welfare needs of the children they look after.
- Ensure that children are involved in creating their personal emergency evacuation plans.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children are happy. A child said: 'It's fun!' A parent said: 'My son loves staying in residence. It has done wonders for his social and communication skills. It has also helped with his confidence as well.' Children are helpful and respectful towards each other and towards staff. They show real empathy towards each other and are very encouraging and nurturing, particularly towards those less able than themselves. For example, children help each other at mealtimes: setting the table, serving food and cleaning the table. An older child was also happy to watch a film rated for younger children until the younger children had gone to bed.

Children clearly understand the rules and boundaries and seem happy to adhere to them. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They thoroughly enjoy their residential experience. A child said: 'I love having the opportunity to go to resi. The only improvement I can think of is that I can't go every term.' They particularly enjoy the activities and being with their friends. Often children who have disabilities can feel isolated at home as their friends can be spread across the county. This school enables them to meet up and have 'sleep-overs' with their friends as their peers in mainstream provision might do. A parent said: 'My son is very isolated outside of normal school hours. It is helping him so much with his social skills, learning and preparing for adulthood. I do not know how we as a family would cope without this provision.'

Children make exceptional progress academically from their starting points. Children in residence have higher educational outcomes than their peers who do not use the residential provision. The residential experience means that children are able to access extra tuition for subjects they may be struggling in. They have dedicated time for their homework with staff available to help them. A child said: 'I always do my homework at the after-school club. They help me.' Children have clear boundaries, and a good night's sleep which enables them to better access learning the next day.

Additionally, they learn many new skills that they will need as they grow into adults. They work hard to achieve targets that range from learning to tying shoelaces to reading a train timetable. They also enjoy completing the house challenge. These challenges have included building Lego towers, making beds and setting the table. Children are highly focused and competitive when completing the house challenge. Children not only learn new skills, they also learn social skills such as communication, turn-taking and emotional resilience. The experience of staying in the residential provision enhances children's life opportunities.

Children thoroughly enjoy a wide range of activities such as sports, cooking, board games and swimming. A parent said: 'He loves Hero Clicks and has learned to ride a bike because of the residential team.' Other children have become confident swimmers because they go swimming regularly with the residential staff. Some

activities take place in the local and wider community, including at other schools and colleges. This means that children integrate into society and socialise with their peers. All activities have an educational focus, but also help children to build on their self-esteem, resilience and confidence. Children also have opportunities to participate in activities that they would not normally try. For example, children went up a steep hill in a cable car. A parent said: 'He has managed to try activities that he has struggled to attempt with us and has gained insight into his avoidance behaviour. He is now able to better manage this.'

Children are highly involved in their residential experience. They are very clear about what they like and don't like. Staff listen, and implement changes when they are able to. Children are at the centre of all practice. For example, they are asked what they think about the activities and what activities they would like to do. This helps staff to formulate and review activity plans so that children continue to have an enjoyable learning experience. Children know that they can talk to staff if they have a worry. A child said: 'The staff listen to me and always find a solution.' An independent visitor comes to the residential provision. This provides children with another person who they can talk to. However, when asked, children did not know who the independent visitor is, or how to contact her.

Staff have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the children. This enables them to provide a high standard of care. A parent said: 'I trust staff understand what I am saying because they understand my son and his needs.' However, staff do not have access to well-organised and up-to-date information about children.

Children are in good emotional and physical health. Staff competently manage lifelong health conditions, ensuring that the child's dignity is upheld. Children benefit from the provision of healthy meals and snacks. They learn about how to keep themselves fit and healthy. For example, children enjoy learning how to make fruit and vegetable smoothies, or how to meditate to help them relax. Medication is safely stored and administered. Children are starting the process of self-medicating by learning about the medication they are taking and when it is due. This will help them to transition into adulthood and independent living.

The residential provision offers equality of opportunity. Children who live on the other side of the county or who have parents who do not have transport can stay overnight and experience the same opportunities as others who live nearer to the school.

The residential provision is looking worn and tired in places. The school is currently unable to invest in the environment because the local authority is reviewing the provision. However, staff try to make it as child-friendly and homely as possible with bright wall displays, comfy sofas, and duvet covers that reflect each child's interests. A parent said: 'He is able to take part in a stress-free environment with people he knows well, which adds to his experience and is something we find hard to replicate at home.'

## **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

The safety and welfare of children are a high priority in this school. Children feel safe and parents agree that their children are safe. Staff have a good understanding of how to keep children safe. Safeguarding systems are robust. Staff work in partnership with other agencies to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the children.

Work with parents is outstanding. Parents are extremely well supported. Parents appreciate the high level of support staff give them. Staff provide essential early help, enabling and empowering parents to get the services they require. They also provide training on a range of topics, such as understanding autism, as well as staff being someone parents can talk to. Parents find this support invaluable. Staff share good practice and knowledge with other schools, as well as working closely with external agencies to safeguard children.

Bullying is not reported as an issue at this school. Staff manage any bullying-type behaviour effectively. A child said: 'Sometimes people are mean but the staff look after me.'

The independent visitor spoke about a child who is currently residing in residence for four nights per week. This is unusual but necessary to safeguard the child. She said: 'The provision has prevented a crisis situation at home.' All departments within the school work closely together to achieve the best outcomes for each individual child.

Positive behaviour management is strongly promoted. Incentive schemes help children to understand that they are achieving, rather than focusing on negative aspects of their behaviour. For example, they start each class or period of residence with zero points and earn points as they go. These points are then theirs and cannot be taken away from them. Behaviour management systems emphasise a holistic approach for children, as an alternative to restraint. There have been no restraints within the last year. Listening to and engaging with children, coupled with warm and supportive relationships with children and their parents, are key to reduced incidents and improved behaviour. Positive behaviour has been instrumental in improving learning outcomes for children. The school has devised this research-based system of support and, due to its success, has disseminated it to other schools.

Vetting procedures help to protect children from unsuitable adults working with them. All appropriate checks are carried out. At least one member of the interview panel has received safer recruitment training. This means that the interview panel has the skills to make safe recruitment decisions.

Children know what to do if the fire alarm sounds. They practise this regularly, including 'walk-through' sessions. Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) are completed for children who have additional disabilities such as hearing loss. These are well known by the staff. However, PEEPs are not completed with the child. This

would help to reassure the child about what extra support they will receive if the fire alarm sounds.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The residential provision is an integral, positive part of the school that enables children to access additional learning effectively. Children are determined to succeed and this is supported and nurtured by the opportunities the residential provision offers.

Staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic about providing an excellent service for children and their parents. A child said: 'They are very kind and help me to learn stuff.' Staff have high aspirations for children and use creative approaches to inspire and motivate them. For example, a member of staff has developed activities to help children to have greater focus on their learning by developing mindfulness techniques with them. This helps them to relax so that they are ready to learn.

Staff have access to a highly developed training programme. This provides them with the skills and knowledge they need to provide a high standard of care and education for each child. A parent made the following comment: 'Caring staff who are genuinely interested in the students, their well-being and progress.'

The extremely effective management team offers strong and supportive leadership. Governors have a very good understanding of the school and offer valuable support and challenge. A governor said: 'I really enjoy coming in to the school and I am very proud to be a governor here. The commitment of staff is amazing.' There is very strong oversight of the residential provision. The strengths and weaknesses are clearly understood. The development plan is insightful and seeks to challenge and extend the provision.

A parent said: 'The school has been fantastic morning, noon and night.' A child said that the residential provision is 'resi-tastic!'

### **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:** SC001836

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Jason Brooks

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01509 890237

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## **Inspector**

Joanne Vyas, social care inspector (lead)



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