

Langham Oaks

School Road, Langham, Colchester, Essex CO4 5PA

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Langham Oaks is a residential special school with academy status. Up to 28 pupils board for between one and four nights per week. The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. The last welfare inspection took place in March 2017

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 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: 1 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The staff use innovative and stimulating approaches, based on research, to help the children to develop their social and physical skills.
- Children's opportunities to engage with education improve significantly because they attend this provision.
- The children are able to identify a wide range of staff with whom they have excellent relationships. Consequently, if the children have concerns or worries, they are able to discuss these with trusted staff.
- Attending the provision enables children to maintain their relationships with one another. These friendships are an important part of the children's networks.
- Children have access to an exceptional range of activities. The activities encourage the development of their self-confidence, social and independent-living skills.
- Records relating to safeguarding are excellent. They provide a clear account of what has happened when a safeguarding concern has arisen. The records show what action has been taken to follow up on safeguarding referrals.
- Leaders and managers have improved their level of oversight of the service. As a result, the children benefit from excellent resources.
- Risk assessments are of an extremely high quality. As a result, children learn to take managed risks. Senior managers routinely monitor and review the children's plans to ensure that they minimise risks.
- The school governors visit regularly. They are updated through a thorough, well-researched and well-analysed report detailing the outcomes for children. Consequently, the governors are well informed and can monitor the provision effectively.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make outstanding progress because they board at this provision. Children who attend the residential provision are regularly high achievers at school, which further bolsters their self-esteem. Before attending this school, some of the children were accessing only five hours of education per week in a specialist resource. Since attending this school, these children are now receiving a full-time syllabus. They are participating in the 24-hour curriculum, which provides further social, emotional and educational development opportunities for them. As a result, some children are progressing with coursework that will lead towards GCSE examinations. Other

children are undertaking recognised qualifications. The children's outcomes and results have improved because they have significantly increased their attendance and engagement in education. Some of the children have had such traumatic early experiences that they are unlikely, without a wide range of therapeutic interventions, to attend mainstream schools. Observations of staff highlighted the work that the staff put in to provide the children with every opportunity to make outstanding progress towards education attendance. Children's life chances improve because the staff support the children to fulfil their academic potential.

Children build excellent relationships with the staff. There is a school-wide approach to understanding the individual needs of the children. The excellent relationships help children who had a poor and disrupted early education experience to settle into school. For these children, the residential provision is central to this. The children make exceptional progress because of the holistic approach to their education and care. Children spoken to during this inspection understand the positive impact that the residential provision has had on their outcomes and experiences. The children's comments included:

- 'This is a better than good school. We get so many chances and so much opportunity. The staff are fabulous. They really listen.'
- 'Staff really listen to you and get to know you.'
- 'I have learned much more because I am here.'
- 'I was in crisis when I arrived. I was often needing to be restrained in the previous school. Since I have been here, I am able to be calm and participate in lessons. This is as a result of the input of the residential provision.'

Some of the children have diagnosed behaviour disorders. The staff use a reward system effectively in the school and in the residential provision to help to encourage and reinforce positive behaviour. The reward system scores children on the high-five key principles of listening, showing respect, self-regulation, participation and perseverance. The daily and, in some cases, sessional monitoring of these scores highlights that the top achievers each week in education, activities, conduct and social time are the residential pupils. Application of this consistent approach has helped the children to learn to manage their behaviour better. Incidents have reduced and, importantly, concerns have diminished.

Children begin to make friends. They take part in an excellent range of activities. The children use the school's indoor sports hall and outdoor hard court for sports and games. The ICT suite is also available for the children to use, as well as access to the facilities in the residential building, which includes games consoles, pool, darts and board-games. The children can also access exciting off-site facilities, such as swimming, mountain-biking, canoeing, woodland trips, a running club and various other leisure pursuits. A review of the children's plans during this inspection highlighted a significant improvement in behaviour for children who access the residential provision.

The senior staff have used research into the positive use of circus skills to develop children's social skills. Children are encouraged to take part in circus skills activities. These skills help to develop the children's self-esteem as their ability to juggle and use a diabolo improve. Alongside this, children also start to work collaboratively with one another as their capabilities grow. This is a significant development for these children, many of whom have an autistic spectrum disorder diagnosis. Learning to work together, discuss their play and enjoy one another's company are included as part of the 24-hour curriculum.

The children who attend the residential provision do so for between one and four nights per week, dependent on their assessed needs. The senior managers have improved the process for transition by introducing a home visit. An experienced member of the residential staff visits the child at their family home to discuss the child's care needs and to gather information. These visits have helped the staff to understand the children before they stay overnight in the residential provision. The information that is gathered at these visits is shared with the residential staff through an excellent written risk assessment and care plan. These plans are high quality and help the staff to know triggers and provide important information to guide the staff in helping the child to settle. Children are supported to contact their parent or carer during their stay if they wish. They can do so via mobile phone, emails or other electronic methods, such as texting.

Children eat a healthy diet. Sport is encouraged, in particular basketball, football and swimming. The staff have high aspirations for the children to achieve the highest standard possible in these activities. Participation in these games raises self-esteem as well as fitness levels. It also helps the children to learn the social etiquette of sports, such as contribution, encouragement and cooperation, which, for some children who have significant learning needs, is significant.

Children who have a diagnosed autistic spectrum disorder and who often struggle in day-to-day social activities are involved in a cooking project. During this activity, children work together. The older children genuinely help the younger children to learn to cut vegetables with very sharp knives safely and well. The children learn, under the guidance of an inspirational staff member, to season and serve the food to others, such as at a fund-raising event in the school that parents, friends and governors attended. Feedback from those who attended praised the high quality of the food and the way in which the children worked together, cooking and serving at the table, which parents felt raised the children's self-esteem. This level of participation and collaboration is outstanding. A child taking part in this project has gone on to gain a work experience placement in a local restaurant. This, again, is extremely positive as it prepares this child for the world of work.

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

The whole-school approach to helping children to improve their behaviour, through nurture, individualised attention and interaction and session-by-session review of each child's needs, is excellent. The team-around-the-group provides holistic interventions that are tailored to each child's changing needs. The interventions are adapted continuously so that children benefit from therapy and relationships that meet their needs at any given time. This means that staff are well placed to identify safeguarding concerns as they arise and to take action immediately.

Children feel safe in the residential provision. They have settled because of the hard work and dedication of the staff and the improvements that have been made to the admissions process. The children are looked after by well-informed staff who understand their needs.

The staff seek the children's views through surveys. They have used new technology innovatively to gather these views. The feedback from the children is that they feel that they are safely cared for in the residential provision. Observation of children interacting with the residential staff evidenced the nurturing approach and calm effective communication style used by staff.

Children do not go missing from the provision. The children enjoy their time and want to stay. Staff are aware of the process to follow should a child go missing. The staff have a good relationship with the local police officers. The staff have completed training to raise their awareness of the risks of child sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation. As a result, the staff are keenly aware of these risks. They work with external organisations to raise the children's understanding of these risks, and to minimise the risks. Staff monitor the children's use of social media. This monitoring reassures the staff that the children are using technology safely.

The way in which the staff manage risks and concerns is excellent. The senior managers ensure that there are regular reviews of the thorough risk assessments. Information from these reviews is shared with the staff through the team-around-the-group meetings. These daily meetings include information-sharing across the school to ensure a consistent approach.

Senior staff and managers collate information from concerns, significant incidents and physical interventions. The senior staff team identifies any patterns and trends from regular reviews of this information. As a result, safeguarding concerns are excellently managed through this process. There have been no consultations with the designated officer. The thorough monitoring and supervision and clear management oversight give confidence that the management team understands the safeguarding process as described in its policy.

Staff work skilfully together to identify behaviours that may lead to bullying behaviours. They work to help the children to learn to tolerate one another and each

other's views. Staff training has helped the staff group to understand the risks of radicalisation. This means that the staff are alert to potential concerns and understand how some of these children may be vulnerable to this specific issue.

Trained and experienced staff have used physical intervention twice since the last inspection. The staff have reflected on these incidents to assure themselves that they were managed in line with the regulations. The information regarding the antecedent triggers has been analysed by the senior staff, with a view to developing alternative ways to manage similar situations in the future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Senior managers have an excellent understanding of the children's needs. The 24-hour curriculum has been redesigned. This has concentrated the work in the school and the residential provision to better engage with children. As a result, the children start to overcome the issues that have affected their early life. Working with multi-agency colleagues, such as play therapists, means that the residential provision is supported to develop the nurturing approach that these children need.

The governors visit regularly and are updated by a thorough, well-researched and analysed report that details the outcomes for children. The governors provide comprehensive and helpful reports that feed into the plans for improvement in the residential provision.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of the children. They are enthusiastic about their work with the children and are committed to meeting their needs. The children talk positively about the staff who support them. The children's families and carers reinforce this positive feedback. A highly motivated management team works effectively to ensure that the needs of the children are met well. The management team has redesigned the monitoring system to put achieving the best outcomes for children at the centre of it. As a result, the management team can quickly adapt its intervention to make greater improvements.

The staff in the residential provision link extremely well with other professionals who work with the children. Social workers comment positively about the quality of the service and, in particular, how well the staff build and maintain their excellent relationships with the children. Senior managers offer challenge when they see that other agencies are not acting in the children's best interests. This challenge has resulted in positive outcomes, such as encouraging a child to extend their stay, to support their learning needs and provide greater assistance for the family.

The headteacher and managers promote an ethos of inclusion and tolerance among the children. This dovetails with work undertaken in the school to help children to tolerate each other's views. A restorative approach is used if there are signs that discontent is beginning to appear. Bullying is not tolerated and staff remain vigilant to the symptoms of antisocial behaviour.

The staff have access to a range of training courses to assist them in their roles. Supervision has occurred regularly and has focused on safe-care and improving outcomes for the children. All of the staff have started their diploma-level training in line with the national minimum standards. As a result, suitably qualified and experienced staff are working with the children. The residential provision's senior manager is experienced and has a relevant social care diploma.

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: 1213822

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ms Emma Paramor

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Michael Mulvaney, social care inspector (lead)



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