

Ash Field Academy

Ash Field School, Broad Avenue, Leicester LE5 4PY

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is an academy school with 155 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 38 boys and girls using the residential service, usually for one or two nights a week.

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 February 2018

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: 24 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children with a range of complex needs receive skilled and individualised care. As a result, they make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- Children are supported to participate in a range of after-school activities and social opportunities. Prior to using the residential service, some children have been isolated or have had limited social opportunities as a result of their needs. Carers and families report that this residential care experience makes a significant difference to their lives. Children are more confident and they have fun.

- Children benefit from a range of specialist support. Multi-agency working is strong. Consequently, children have improving health, communication skills and mobility.
- A stable, experienced and skilled care team builds trusting relationships with children. Children experience continuity of care across school and residential care. There are clear routines and consistent expectations about behaviour, which children respond to positively. This supports them to feel safe.
- Children contribute to a vibrant student council and to their planning meetings. Children's views are listened to and acted on. Their choices influence decisions about their care.
- Experienced, skilled governors know their areas of responsibility well and challenge school leaders. Leaders and governors work very well together. This supports continuous improvement.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Although staff receive supervision and appraisals, some staff have reported that they are not motivated by the supervision they receive. The head of care will ensure that relevant managers receive supervision training to enhance their skills as supervisors. Staff will receive training to encourage them to fully participate in supervision, as part of the development of their practice and skills.

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

Recommendation

- Managers should receive supervision training to enhance their skills. Staff should receive training about the purpose of supervision to support the development of their practice and skills. (National minimum standard 19.6)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress in this residential provision. Parents and carers report that they have great confidence in the staff caring for their children. One parent said: 'My son is always very excited about spending time in residence. It is a brilliant facility that has made a difference to his life and his progress. He has built up a strong friendship group. He loves the opportunity to be more independent. The children are very caring of each other because the staff are so caring.'

Extended days and overnight stays are planned carefully. Staff and managers make sure that they have detailed information about each child prior to their residential stay. Children visit prior to overnight stays so that they are familiar with the environment. Since the last inspection, bathrooms have been redesigned and refurbished. Children are very positive about their residential provision.

Managers and staff take account of each child's abilities, needs and friendships when planning groups that stay together. In this way, children are supported to settle and to build positive relationships with their peers and the staff.

There is a very nurturing atmosphere within residence. Staff are great role models. They show children how to be very respectful of each other and how to help each other. When children are new to the group, established residents are very welcoming. Children benefit from positive peer role models. A carer said that one child, 'loves having a leadership role and supporting other students'. Children are involved in the recruitment of new staff. This further supports child-centred decision-making.

Residence provides the opportunity for children to have lots of fun, and to learn new skills. There are planned activities such as swimming, dance lessons and sensory storytelling, and children also have the opportunity to attend a youth club. A ukulele club and meditation sessions will begin next term. Some children choose to use their time in residence to do homework. Children benefit from the school's good community relations. Children raise funds for charities, have opportunities for work experience and attend local clubs.

Children make significant progress in developing independence skills. They respond very well when staff give them responsibility for their belongings, self-care and cooking. The opportunity to stay in a self-contained flat within residence motivates children to improve their independence skills. Children are very excited about stays in the flat and look forward to them.

The student council gives children a strong voice in the running of the residential service. Children who have a range of needs and abilities are supported to contribute their views to decisions about school and residential care. Children take the responsibility seriously, and are respectful of each other's contribution. It is a vibrant, lively group. The views of children are listened to and respected by staff. For

example, when children requested an adult-free table for meal times, to support their independence, this was agreed.

Staff support children's transitions when they move on from this school and residential provision. Staff liaise with families, transition workers and health colleagues. They advocate for children very effectively. Staff share information with families in a timely way. Parents say that communication with the school is excellent.

All children have an individual care plan. Care plan goals are linked to the objectives of the children's education plans. Pupils' progress is assessed and evaluated well. The school can clearly demonstrate that accessing the residential service and having extended days improves children's outcomes.

There are comprehensive health plans for each child. This means that residential staff have access to detailed health information. Staff understand each child's health needs, including their emotional health needs, extremely well. Their skill in meeting the wide range of health needs is impressive. Staff have received training in a range of medical interventions. Children can access a range of specialist services, such as counselling and a speech and language service. A qualified paediatric nurse oversees the healthcare provision, including medication administration. There has been an audit of medication, as recommended at the previous inspection.

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

Staff and managers receive regular and comprehensive safeguarding training. Systems are in place, which staff understand and use, to identify when early intervention may be appropriate. Highly effective systems are also in place to report child welfare concerns. Appropriate referrals have been made to social care and to the local authority designated officer. Robust recruitment processes protect children.

Staff and managers provide very positive feedback about the impact of whole-school safeguarding training. School leaders, including the governor with lead responsibility for safeguarding, have reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures and updated them in line with local authority procedures. The governor has audited safeguarding practice. This has included safeguarding 'tests'. The results demonstrate the comprehensive knowledge of staff about risks to children, their understanding of allegations against staff and the whistle-blowing policy.

Children report that they feel safe. Parents, carers, professionals and staff report that they are confident safeguarding concerns are identified and information is appropriately reported and shared. However, governors, leaders and staff are not complacent about safeguarding children. For example, they have implemented new software to better capture safeguarding information and improve recording systems.

Staff fully respect each child's privacy and dignity when providing personal care. They are acutely aware of the safeguarding needs of vulnerable, disabled children. Children have high-quality moving and handling plans. Staffing ratios are appropriate for every shift to safely meet each child's individual needs. Night staff sensitively

monitor and support children throughout the night. The residential environment is adapted and fully accessible. A range of sensory and communication aids are available. Rigorous risk assessments ensure that children are cared for in a safe environment.

Children have individual risk assessments as part of their care plan. If a child's needs change, new information becomes available or new behaviours emerge, the risk assessments are updated. High-quality monitoring and supervision of children contribute to the fact that children do not leave the site without permission. Physical intervention has also not been required. A behaviour support policy focuses on the reinforcement of positive behaviours. There are many examples of the positive impact of multidisciplinary work across school and residence on children's behaviour. Children become less anxious and are more confident. Children who have previously been isolated participate in group activities and develop much better social skills.

There is a robust e-safety policy that is also referred to in the child protection procedures and staff conduct policy. Leaders and staff are aware of research highlighting the vulnerabilities of children who have additional needs, when using digital technology. Children and families receive very clear information about this. Children's use of digital technology is carefully monitored.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care is experienced and highly skilled. She has an excellent understanding of each child's needs, and is committed to ensuring that the residential experience makes a difference to children's progress and outcomes. She is trained in and contributes to the school's 'Move' programme that supports the development of children's mobility.

Leaders and managers have a very positive ethos, which is shared by care staff. The atmosphere in the residential service is extremely welcoming, warm and nurturing. Staff say that their work is 'massively rewarding'. They have a very positive attitude towards the children, and are ambitious and aspirational for the children. All staff are highly skilled in communicating with and engaging children. All children and parents report that they have positive relationships with staff, and children say they have fun during their stays.

The diverse staff group reflects the identities of the children. Very close and effective working relationships with school staff mean that children experience continuity of care. This provides them with security and reassurance.

Staff training and development are excellent. Staff undertake a broad range of training and hold, or are working towards, a relevant qualification.

Staff receive supervision and appraisals. However, some staff have reported that they are not always motivated to participate in supervision. The head of care has plans to ensure that managers receive supervision training to enhance their skills. Staff will also receive training to encourage them to fully participate in supervision.

Experienced, skilled governors know their areas of responsibility well and challenge

school leaders. Governors know the children in residence and receive regular reports about their progress and development. Leaders and governors work together effectively to continuously improve. Leaders have completed a thorough self-evaluation of residential care. The senior leadership team and residential team continue to consult and review so that they can identify opportunities to improve. Children also take responsibility for continual improvement. The student council has created a list of objectives. When asked about their list, they responded: 'It is a work in progress.' This reflects the aspirational ethos of the whole school.

Since the last inspection:

- Bathrooms have been improved.
- Work has been undertaken to improve fire safety.
- The number of night care staff has been increased to meet changing needs and to ensure that night staff have opportunities to attend training.
- An induction booklet has been developed to support children's transitions to residential care.
- Children have been given access to a specially adapted cookery area.

Children also benefit from improvements in school, such as the increased availability of the counsellor and the appointment of a qualified children's nurse.

A member of the senior team has lead responsibility for residential care and is also the lead for pupil progress within the school. Very effective pupil progress tracking systems clearly show the impact of residential stays.

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: SC006451

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Inspector(s)

Cathey Moriarty, social care inspector



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