

Aurora Eccles

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 four and 20. Residential accommodation is offered to pupils aged eight years and above. There are 138 children on roll, 11 of whom reside at the school on a weekly or full-time basis. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses in the grounds. The school is situated in rural Norfolk, between Norwich and Thetford. The school caters for children with a specific learning difficulty, social and communication difficulties and their associated behavioural difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2017.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 June 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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: 26 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- The accommodation has not been maintained to a high standard. Some children reside in accommodation that is not good enough and that conveys little sense of value.
- There is limited evidence to show the progress that children make; new progress monitoring systems have just been introduced.
- The quality of case records is variable. One case record was not fully recorded. Children's admission paperwork and subsequent plans do not capture or consider the cultural backgrounds of the children.
- The training for some new, inexperienced staff is limited and does not fully prepare them for working with children.
- Routine communication with families is not consistent, leaving some families unsure about their children's experiences in the residential provision.
- Children's risk assessments do not include information about the individual factors that influence how staff should respond if children go missing.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- The children's health needs are now well met.
- A new designated safeguarding lead ensures that actions taken in response to safeguarding concerns are appropriate and timely.
- The management team has a realistic view of the current quality of the residential provision.
- The staff are knowledgeable about children's individual needs and routines. They know the children well.
- The management team ensures a strong approach to safe recruitment.
- A comprehensive quality assurance process has been implemented.

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 standard for residential special schools:

- 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.

Recommendations

- Review and reflect on the training needs of new support staff.
- Improve routine communication with families to provide consistent information about the children's experiences in the residential provision.
- Share individual plans with families.
- Ensure that case records clearly capture the rationale for care-related decisions.
- Ensure that children's individual plans state the response required from staff in the event that the child goes missing.
- Ensure that case records capture and consider the children's diverse needs in relation to race, religion and culture.

Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, the management team has made a number of improvements in the residential provision. As a result, the children are receiving better quality care and support. A new interim principal has been instrumental in this progress. One member of staff said, 'The school has been moved forward 30 years in the last six months.' The principal is realistic about the current quality of the residential provision and recognises that further improvements are necessary.

The accommodation has not been maintained to a high standard. The school leadership team reported delays in addressing previously recognised failings. Leaders stated that these delays arose from changes to plans for the accommodation. Although the management team has recently undertaken a programme of improvements within the residential accommodation, these delays are unacceptable. They result in children residing in accommodation that is not good enough and which conveys little sense of value. Doors identified as damaged at the last inspection remained damaged at this inspection. Ceiling tiles that were broken and stained at the last inspection remain broken and stained at this inspection. Children reported dissatisfaction with the physical environment.

There is limited evidence to show the progress that children make. The principal has introduced a new system to monitor and measure the progress in relation to emotional, social and psychological well-being. This monitoring is in its infancy, with only baseline data currently available. The system has the potential to provide valuable data for staff to analyse and act on.

Families are generally positive about the school. Most report that the residential provision has a positive effect on the children's educational attainment. Parents spoke of children who, prior to arrival at the school, had been out of school or struggling to attend now attending and enjoying school.

The children's health needs are well met. Since the last inspection, a nurse has been appointed to a new role. She has introduced a rigorous approach to the safe management of medication. She has quickly made significant improvements. In addition, a newly formed team of therapeutic staff has been appointed. These staff are developing a cohesive service for the children.

The staff consult with the children and involve them in discussion about activities and menus. The school council has recently been re-established and includes residential pupils.

Staff are knowledgeable about children's individual needs and routines. They know the children well. The staff recognise changes to moods and behaviours and adapt their responses accordingly.

The children have a structured day and evening routine. They have access to a varied and nutritious diet.

The quality of case records is variable. In one instance, the rationale for a significant decision on the care of a child was not recorded. Therefore, should the child wish to access their records in the future, the file would not contain important relevant information to help them understand why decisions were made.

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

Since the last inspection, a new designated safeguarding lead has been appointed. He has sound knowledge of internal and external safeguarding policies and procedures. As a result, actions taken in response to safeguarding concerns are appropriate and timely.

The designated safeguarding lead provides a continuous training programme for all staff, covering contextual safeguarding issues. The knowledge and practice of staff has improved as a result.

No children have gone missing from the residential provision. The management team has updated the relevant policies and procedures. These are now clearer and consider what should be done if a child goes missing in the dark. A grab bag is now available containing a torch, high-visibility jackets and other safety items.

Risk assessments have improved. However, although the staff are clear on the action that they must take if a child attempts to or does go missing, individual risk assessments do not reflect individual risks or the required responses should this occur. This lack of clarity increases the potential for mistakes to occur.

The staff know the children well; they understand triggers for behaviour and respond consistently. This contributes to the staff rarely needing to use physical interventions to keep children safe.

The children and families report that staff take bullying seriously. A child said, 'If the staff hear it they deal with it straight away. If they don't hear it, I tell them and they will have a word with the person.' All of the children talked about having a trusted person whom they can turn to if they are upset or worried about something.

The management team operates a strong approach to safe recruitment. This lessens the potential for unsuitable people to gain employment at the school.

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

Since that last inspection, there have been significant changes to the management team at the school and within the wider organisation. These changes, within the

wider organisation, have directly affected the pace of change in developing the residential accommodation. Consequently, the previously unmet national minimum standard in relation to the maintenance of the accommodation has once again not been met.

An interim principal has been recently appointed. She has had a positive effect on the residential provision at the school, providing mentoring support to the management team. Actions taken since January 2018 have resulted in six of the seven previously unmet minimum standards being met.

The interim principal has introduced a comprehensive quality assurance process. This provides the opportunity to ensure that improvements take place. Independent visits continue to provide challenge and oversight. These processes contribute to improvement and ensure that the management team has a realistic impression of the school's progress.

The head of care undertakes care and risk assessments. She does this alongside teachers, support and therapeutic staff, parents and the children. The plans are regularly reviewed by the relevant staff. However, the plans and assessments are not shared with families. This limits parents' and children's participation in the process and does not give them the opportunity to challenge or correct final content. It is therefore unclear if the final plans are consistent with families' and children's expectations.

Children's admission paperwork and subsequent plans do not capture or consider the cultural backgrounds of the children. As a result, this information is missing and does not inform the care that the children receive.

Communication with families is mixed. Some parents report a lack of routine communication and some are unaware of what their children experience on a day-to-day basis in the residential provision.

The staff, including those who work in auxiliary positions, have access to training opportunities to support them in their roles. This has directly improved staff's understanding of safeguarding processes and increased the safety of the children. The staff have also received training that specifically focuses on the safeguarding needs of disabled children. However, new care staff have received limited training to prepare them to meet the range of needs of children at the school.

The staff receive supervision. This includes regular and effective support for those with management responsibilities.

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: Mr Chris Brown (acting)

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01953 887217

Email address: chris.brown@the-aurora-group.com

Inspectors

Ashley Hinson: social care inspector (lead)

Mandy Nightingale: Her Majesty's Inspector, social care



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