

Walworth School

Walworth School, Bluebell Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 7LP
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Walworth School is a maintained residential special school that provides education and residential care for boys and girls of primary and junior school age who have social and/or emotional and/or mental health difficulties. The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of Newton Aycliffe. The number of children residing at the school each night may vary, and they stay for two to four nights each week. The school does not provide residential care at weekends or during school holidays. The maximum number of children that may reside at the school is 10 and the number of pupils at Walworth cannot exceed 90.

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 November 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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: 23 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The children make excellent progress in all areas of their development. The school staff and the residential staff work seamlessly to ensure that the children's learning is continuous across the 24-hour curriculum.
- The children's social skills and confidence improve due to their residential stay. The children enjoy a range of activities on the school site and in the community.
- The children benefit from access to a range of therapeutic services such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy.
- The school prioritises the emotional well-being of the children. Consequently, the children's emotional health improves. The children have direct access at school to individualised mental health therapy.
- The procedures for protecting children are effective.
- The children thrive from the structure and routine. The predictability of the residential routine helps to lower the children's anxieties, and their independence skills grow.
- The leaders show dedication, ambition and drive. This filters through to the staff team and its care practice.
- The leaders continually strive to improve practice. The leaders use research effectively to continually improve outcomes for the children.
- The children's complex needs are fully met. The leaders sustain strong relationships with other professionals to make sure that the children receive the services they need.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Children's risk assessments should be updated to make sure that they all include clear action for staff to take to manage incidents. This should include a chronology of incidents to enable clear recognition of current risks and allow robust monitoring.
- Training on current risks that could affect the children, such as county lines, should be provided.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children have excellent relationships with the staff. The staff understand the children's very complex needs. The children's confidence grows because the staff listen to their wishes and, where possible, they facilitate the choices the children make about their care.

The children enjoy their residential experience. The children develop self-care skills which will help them to be as independent as possible in later life. The children make excellent progress developing their social skills. As a result, the children make friends, some for the first time. One young person commented, 'I feel totally different now I'm here. I'm much happier. I have good friends and most of all I feel accepted.'

The children's emotional well-being significantly improves. The children are benefiting from support from the specialist mental health therapist who is located on site. This enables the children to attend group and one-to-one specialist support without having to wait for appointments or to travel. The new whole-school focus on improving mental health awareness is supporting children to recognise their feelings and the feelings of others. Innovative projects are helping the children to recognise feelings, such as being sad or scared. This is also raising the children's awareness of how to look after others in this position. Considering the children's complex needs, this is a big achievement.

The children benefit from an excellent range of onsite activities. The new library is well stocked with a selection of children's educational and leisure books for all ages. The space is providing children with a positive social environment where they can improve their reading skills. A new sensory room, developed from research, along with support from the school's occupational therapist, provides children with a safe and calming place to explore and progress their sensory skills.

The children make good progress in all areas of their development because the 24-hour curriculum is seamless. The children have shared targets between the residential setting and the school. This ensures that their learning is reinforced in both settings.

The children and their families are benefiting greatly from whole-family support. The family support worker helps to identify family needs and links families with services which help to prevent family breakdown. The family support worker is active in researching the prevalent needs of families and runs innovative groups to support their needs. One parent commented, 'I have been invited into school many times on courses to help understand behaviour problems. The school is outstanding in its approach. The focus is totally on the child.'

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

The children feel safe. The arrangements for keeping children safe are effective. The school works closely with other professionals such as social workers and designated officers to share information.

The staff know the children very well and they quickly intervene to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour. The staff use their positive relationships with the children to divert behavioural issues quickly. As a result, physical intervention is rare.

The children's risk assessments are updated after incidents occur. However, the actions for the staff to take to manage risk are not always clearly defined. The reviews of the risk assessment are not dated. Consequently, it is not clear how current some risks are. The children's behaviour management plans are not always reviewed in line with children's risk assessments. As a result, there could be some confusion about risk and behaviour management.

The staff complete a range of training, which provides them with the knowledge to protect the children. The staff undertake wider safeguarding training, which helps them to identify potential risks to children such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The staff have not yet accessed training about other risks to children, such as county lines.

New employees are thoroughly vetted to ensure that they are safe to work with the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The children thrive from the exceptionally nurturing approach of the leaders. The staff team follows this way of working. The leaders know each child very well and they ensure that the care they receive is completely child focused. The leaders demonstrate ambition for each child to achieve. They have high expectations of the staff team to deliver consistently high-quality care.

The lives of the children and their families improve because the leaders continuously research new ideas to support their very complex needs. The leaders have an excellent understanding of the children's progress and areas where the children need to develop.

The board of governors has robust oversight of this service. Governors are as ambitious as the school leaders in continually striving to improve practice to make sure that the children receive the best care.

The leaders have a sound understanding of the strengths of this service and areas

they wish to develop. The leaders seek opportunities to develop their practice and welcome challenge from others such as the school governors and the independent visitor.

The enthusiastic staff team feels valued and supported by the head of care and the senior leaders. The staff receive regular supervision. In addition to this, the staff benefit from additional reflective team meetings, which are child focused. This helps to ensure that the children receive consistent care and it helps to build the staff confidence in undertaking their roles.

The children make excellent progress in all areas of their development because the leaders make sure that they have access to a variety of specialist therapy services on site. The therapy services include speech and language, occupational health and mental health. The leaders are strong advocates for the children and provide challenge to others where appropriate, to make sure that the children have everything they need.

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: SC040510

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Peter Wallbanks

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Jamie Richardson, social care inspector



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