

# 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 December 2017

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 13 February 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 5 December 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is good because:

- The children make progress socially, emotionally and educationally.
- The children enjoy a range of interesting and targeted activities.
- The children are supported by a dedicated and child-focused staff team.
- Feedback from families is excellent.
- The children feel safe.
- The well-respected residential manager supports his staff well.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Lack of supervision for managers.
- The process for receiving the medication that children bring to school is unclear.
- Lack of clear policy on the management of internet access and mobile phones.
- Some policies contain out-of-date references.
- Parents are not involved in reviewing children's placement plans.

## **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(s) for residential special schools:

- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all medication is safely and securely stored. In particular, ensure that arrangements for the collection of medication are safe and known by all staff.
- Ensure that there is a whole-school approach and a clear policy on the use of mobile technology, in particular internet-enabled devices, during residential time.
- Ensure that the records specified in Appendix 1 are maintained and monitored by the school and that action is taken as appropriate, in particular in relation to safeguarding and child protection.
- Ensure that each child's written placement plan is agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child.

## Inspection judgements

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

This is a good residential provision. The children make progress because of the support that the enthusiastic and committed staff provide. Managers monitor progress and use the learning to inform practice.

Children who board make progress in their educational attainment and attendance. The support that the children receive in the residential provision makes a significant contribution to this. The staff encourage and support children to develop study skills and complete homework. This contributes to children accessing college placements that were previously thought to be beyond them.

The staff are a strength. They are child focused. They celebrate children's achievements as a matter of routine. This conveys messages to children that they are valued. The children get on well with the staff, who support them. The staff are experienced and know the children well.

A consistent theme that emerged in discussion with staff was the emphasis that they put on developing good relationships with the children. The strength of the relationships between the staff and children helps the children to manage their own behaviour.

The children have access to a range of interesting and stimulating activities. Managers monitor the activities that are chosen with a view to encouraging greater variety. The activities are tailored to encourage social interaction and lessen isolation.

Arrangements to manage medication are generally good. The staff have their competency to administer medication assessed. A dedicated room is available for medication administration. However, the process for receiving medication that children bring to school is unclear. This increases the potential for errors to occur.

Feedback from families is excellent. Families value the residential provision and the difference that it makes to their lives and their children's lives. However, parents are not involved in reviewing their children's placement plans. Consequently, parents are not given the opportunity to agree the plans.

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

The children said that they feel safe. Families said that their children are safe. The children have access to an independent person whom they know and with whom they can discuss any concerns.

Two children have gone missing since the last inspection. These incidents were managed appropriately.

The staff support the children to manage their behaviour. The staff intervene

appropriately if children's behaviour deteriorates. They do so without recourse to physical intervention. The staff understand what may trigger difficult behaviour in the children. They are alert to cues that children are beginning to struggle. This knowledge enables them to intervene early to support the children.

The staff know what to do if they have concerns about a child or colleague. They know the reporting processes and whistleblowing mechanisms.

Managers respond to safeguarding concerns effectively. Safeguarding records are comprehensive.

The staff generally write clear and easy-to-follow risk assessments. They tailor these assessments to the individual needs of the children.

The school's current policies and procedures do not consider the approach to managing internet access in the evenings or during the night. Some children can have their phones in their bedrooms at night. This is not formally risk assessed. There is no guidance for staff on what to consider or how to manage this to ensure a safe and balanced approach.

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

A well-respected manager leads the residential provision effectively. He has high aspirations for the children who access it. He leads by example and works with the children, who know him well.

The management team has a thorough understanding of children's plans and progress. A clear and easily understood set of performance data aids all staff to understand how children are doing.

The staff have access to appropriate training. The staff have or are working towards a relevant level 3 qualification.

The management team recognises that supervision is an area that requires improvement. The residential manager ensures that his staff are well supervised. However, the residential manager and the deputy designated safeguarding lead have not had a supervision for over a year. Although they can access ad hoc support, this does not provide formal and documented opportunities to reflect on practice and access emotional support, guidance and challenge. Lack of regular supervision does not meet the school's own policy of half-termly supervision for staff.

The process for admitting children to the residential provision has developed. Staff now undertake a home visit to assess suitability. A professional said that the process for transition is child led and highly effective. They said, 'The move into the provision was handled really well. (The child) was not rushed. It was always on his terms.' The children feel listened to. Regular meetings for residential pupils give children the opportunity to influence activities, decor and food choices as a matter of course.

Internal and external monitoring of the quality of care offers some challenge and identifies areas for improvement. However, internal monitoring has not identified some discrepancies between policies. As a result, some policies contain out-of-date references.

## **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 difference 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:** Gary Corbett

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01206 271571

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## **Inspectors**

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector (lead)

Cathy Russell, social care inspector



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