

Saxon Hill

Saxon Hill Special School, Kings Hill Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9DE
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Saxon Hill is an academy. The school is for children and young people who have a wide range of physical, complex medical, sensory, communication and learning difficulties. Children and young people mostly come from the south Staffordshire area. The school is in a suburban area, approximately one mile from Lichfield city centre. The school has a 14-bed unit called 'The sleepover club' that offers individually based overnight care to children and young people who attend the school and are aged between five and 18 years.

There is a dedicated team of care staff that operates independently of, but in close liaison with, the teaching staff and other members of staff. The sleeping accommodation comprises six twin bedrooms and two single rooms. There are currently 104 children and young people on roll at the school, of which 44 children and young people currently access the residential provision one night per week.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 February 2019

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: 8 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leaders and managers continuously seek new ways to improve outcomes for children and young people through open dialogue, rigorous monitoring and using research to inform their practice.
- All children and young people make progress in all aspects of their lives as a direct result of their residential experiences.
- Safeguarding practice is highly effective. Staff are confident about adopting strategies that reduce risk and safeguard children and young people.
- Feedback from children and young people, their parents and other external partners is extremely positive.
- Children and young people experience highly personalised inductions into the residential provision.
- Excellent relationships exist between families and staff.
- Children and young people are cared for by highly trained staff.
- All staff are experienced and knowledgeable about residential care, and many are long-serving members of staff.
- The school is extremely well led and well managed. Staff from care and education work together to promote the children and young people's welfare.
- Managers routinely reflect on and evaluate their practice in order to make continuous improvements that ultimately improve children and young people's lives.
- Children and young people benefit hugely from stimulating, interesting and rewarding activities during their residential stays.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people who use the residential provision make exceptionally good progress in all aspects of their lives. For example, they make excellent progress in improving their self-confidence and developing their social and communication skills. One parent told the inspector, 'My son has come on in leaps and bounds, and this is all down to sleepover club, they have been great with him.'

Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the needs and characteristics of children and young people, which helps them to provide highly individualised care. Prior to a place being offered, professionals assess all that is known about children and young people, and if it is needed will procure specific training before the admission takes place. This means that no children and young people are excluded from accessing the residential provision if their needs can be met, and families are reassured that when their child arrives the staff have the skills to meet their needs.

Children and young people's needs in relation to their health and well-being are consistently met. Staff have specialist training around children and young people's specific health needs and work closely with medical professionals. Consequently, they are quick to respond to emergencies and are confident about administering medication.

Staff are creative in the way that they interact with the children and young people to obtain their views. Children and young people are encouraged and empowered to put forward suggestions for the development of the residential provision through individual and group discussions, as well as questionnaires. As a result, children and young people grow in confidence, and are able to express their views and be involved in making meaningful decisions about their residential experiences.

There are an excellent range of stimulating, interesting and rewarding activities available to the children and young people, who have varying needs in relation to abilities and communication. Inspectors observed a celebration of the Chinese New Year, which involved children and young people trying Chinese food, making colourful lanterns and learning about the new year celebrations.

Children and young people stay in accommodation that is safe, clean, spacious and suited to their needs. The residential provision provides a comfortable and homely environment which is well maintained and well decorated. Children and young people are able to personalise their bedrooms with pictures and photographs if they wish.

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

The head of care and the staff are conscious that the children and young people in the residential provision are vulnerable as a result of their disabilities. They are especially vigilant in their practice and have created a culture for children and young people which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount.

Staff receive safeguarding training which is refreshed and updated regularly as part of the core staff-training programme. Staff know how to initiate safeguarding procedures if required, and understand their own roles and responsibilities in regard to keeping children and young people safe.

Designated safeguarding leads coordinate a consistent approach to safeguarding concerns. The electronic system for recording concerns provides a meticulous audit trail that demonstrates how procedures have been followed and how practice is reviewed in the light of incidents. Positive relationships with local agencies further underpin the strong ethos of safeguarding that runs through the entire school. Safeguarding children and young people is at the forefront of staff practice.

Staff understand the unique needs of the children and young people in their care. They treat them with dignity and respect and relationships are built on trust. Because of this, staff know how best to respond to each child and young person in order to de-escalate any incidents. Staff consistently encourage and reinforce positive behaviours and support children and young people to manage their anxieties, challenges and behaviours, which positively influences their relationships in the provision and at home.

The recruitment, selection and vetting of staff are effective and promote children and young people's safety. Health and safety within the residential provision is well managed. Routine servicing and checks take place as required. Fire safety precautions are checked on a regular basis; this includes the servicing of firefighting equipment, testing of alarms and conducting of evacuation drills. Risk assessments are routinely reviewed and updated.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

School leaders and the head of care work together with a shared aim of making sure that the residential service continues to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people and their families. This is achieved by using research-based practice to continue to develop the residential provision. Leaders and managers know the strengths and challenges of the residential provision, with one leader telling the inspector, 'We don't wait for change, but instead we make change.'

The head of care provides the staff with strong and clear leadership. She is experienced and appropriately qualified for the role. The staff commented positively about her leadership and how well they are supported.

Residential staff are skilled, enthusiastic and dedicated to the children and young people who they care for. All staff have excellent opportunities to undertake high-quality training which reflects the staff members' needs and those of the children and young people.

Staff supervision is regular and is reflective in nature. This gives staff support and challenge to improve their practice and to strengthen the care they give to children and young people. Targets are set at each supervision meeting, which supports the continuous professional development of staff by providing them with additional responsibilities and tasks. Annual performance meetings with staff effectively assess their performance over a 12-month period. This is further supported by reflective team meetings, with children and young people being central to the discussions and agreed actions.

Excellent systems for monitoring the residential provision both internally and externally are in place, including self-evaluation, independent visitors, quality assurance visits from the local authority, peer reviews and consultation with stakeholders. Reports are shared with the governing body. This enables governors to have a clear oversight of the impact that the provision has had on the outcomes for children and young people.

Managers and staff ensure that there are good relationships and effective communication with parents and carers. One parent told the inspector, 'Whenever I have spoken to staff about [the name of the child], I always feel like they are listening to me.'

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: SC038728

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Melsa Buxton

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01543 414892

Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, social care inspector (lead)
Michelle Spruce, social care inspector



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