

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 159 pupils. The residential area is a dedicated area in the main school, which 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: 11 to 13 March 2019

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: 20 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children thoroughly enjoy their residential experience. They particularly enjoy being with friends, being independent, and the rich and varied activities.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Children demonstrate empathy towards others, something that is encouraged.
- Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for children. This means that children make exceptional progress towards achieving their goals.
- Research-based practice is actively encouraged. Research projects have been widely disseminated. This has had a significant impact on children's progress.
- Children have extensive opportunities to develop their independence and social skills.
- Children are meaningfully involved in decisions affecting the residential provision.
- Children feel safe and secure.
- Leaders provide strong and competent leadership. Any barriers to children accessing the full benefits of the residential provision are robustly challenged.
- Governors, leaders and staff are passionate about providing the best service they can for children, enabling children to live as independent a life as possible.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To ensure that risk assessment encompasses the full range of potential risk.
- To ensure that children's stays are properly planned, especially for children who are new to the residential provision.
- To ensure that care planning systems are helpful to new staff so that they can provide better care for children.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that children's stays are properly planned so that staff can fully meet their individual needs. (Linked to national minimum standard 2)
- Ensure that risk assessments fully protect children. (Linked to national minimum standard 6)
- Care planning should be helpful to new staff to ensure that they can look after children well. (Linked to national minimum standard 21)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children love their residential stays. They particularly enjoy being with friends, being independent and the activities. Their behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate empathy towards others, which is encouraged. A parent praised the fact that her son had been made 'star of the week' for supporting another pupil.

Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for children. This means that children make exceptional progress towards achieving their goals. Research-based practice is actively encouraged. Projects have been widely disseminated, which has significant impact on children's progress. For example, staff have written a curriculum for the children with the most complex needs that focuses on what is important for them to learn. This has received national interest.

Children have extensive opportunities to develop their independence and social skills. A parent said: 'He made pancakes at home and I was surprised he knew what to do. There isn't anywhere else he could get those experiences and skills.' Staff take every opportunity to encourage and support these important skills within a fun and relaxed setting.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions. Children chat with each other and staff. Children are supported well. They learn skills such as social etiquette, using cutlery and choosing. Most children say that they enjoy their meals. Some children plan and cook their own meals while staying in the residential independence flat. A parent said that these stays have significantly improved her son's life skills.

Children thoroughly enjoy the activities. Activities also provide good educational experiences for children, build confidence and self-esteem, and improve communication skills. Activities are highly inclusive, ensuring that all children can participate no matter what disabilities they have.

The health of children is promoted well. Staff are trained in several complex healthcare tasks. Children who are ill are looked after well. Staff are very respectful of each child's feelings. Parents are consulted immediately when there are concerns about a child's health. Medication is safely managed.

Children are meaningfully involved in decisions about the operation of the residential provision. They also significantly contribute to decisions about the way they are cared for by staff and the activities they participate in. Staff and leaders are very child-focused.

Children receive a comprehensive induction into the residential provision. Induction starts with an extended day, during which the child joins in the activities and stays for tea. This is gradually lengthened until the child is comfortable enough to stay

overnight. For one child, staff had not got enough clothes during an extended day. This meant that the child stayed in a wet sweatshirt for most of the evening. Staff acted quickly to ensure that the child's parents provide more clothing for the child's next visit.

Care planning is not detailed enough to provide staff who are new to the provision with the information they need to provide high-quality care for children. However, this does not have a significant impact because staff turnover is low and most residential staff are very experienced and knowledgeable about the children.

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

Behaviour in the residential provision is exceptionally good. Staff implement clear rules that the children understand and follow. Staffing levels are high. Therefore, children are very well supervised. Children feel safe and secure.

Child protection procedures are known and understood by all staff. Regular training ensures that staff remain up to date with current safeguarding concerns such as child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. This helps to keep children safe. Vetting procedures help to protect children from unsuitable adults.

Children do not go missing from this school. They do not report bullying as a concern. Children enjoy each other's company and accept difference as part of everyday life.

Health and safety systems help to protect children from hazards. However, weaknesses in risk assessment for children sharing bedrooms may have compromised the safety of some children. Work carried out with children, and staff vigilance, have lowered any potential risks. Good multi-agency working has also kept risks low. Leaders have responded quickly to identified concerns to ensure that children are safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Managers provide strong and competent leadership. Barriers to children accessing the full benefits of the residential provision are robustly challenged. Changes are being made to the residential provision to ensure that all children over the age of eight, from the school, can have access to it.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. They quickly address identified shortfalls. They strive to continually improve the service by using research and highly effective monitoring systems. Governors provide exceptional support and challenge. They are knowledgeable and passionate.

A wide-ranging training programme means that staff are skilled in complex healthcare tasks. They also have a comprehensive understanding of safeguarding, supporting positive behaviour, and health and safety.

Staff work in partnership with parents and external professionals. This means that children receive a well-organised package of care and education. Parents are very positive about the care their children receive. They say that the residential provision provides huge benefits for their children.

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

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jenny Bone

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Inspector(s)

Joanne Vyas, social care inspector



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