



## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Young people and their parents are consistently positive about the residential provision. Staff form positive relationships with young people and support them to settle and thrive through their residential experience.
- The well-being team, led by the designated safeguarding lead, is highly effective within the school. The promotion and development of this team have led to improvements in the supportive environment for young people, in particular a reduction in sickness and providing them with new skills to manage exam stress and anxiety.
- The development of house families within the residential provision is generating a sense of belonging for young people. It underpins the notion of peer-to-peer support within the school.
- The accommodation has continued to be improved and redecorated over the last year. It is all now of a high standard and homely in its feel and appearance. Young people say that they have been involved in choosing colours and how the communal areas have been designed and laid out.
- The leaders and managers within the school are ambitious and have high aspirations for young people. They are accessible, and young people, as well as staff, are confident in approaching them and sharing their thoughts and ideas.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Residential staff do not always feel as well informed as their colleagues who work during the day. There are no formally recorded joint meetings between the teams within the day and residential provisions, beyond daily handover.
- Staff who are new to the residential provision benefit from a thorough induction. However, there is no evidence of how they are working towards their level 3 (or equivalent) qualification within the first three months of employment.
- The most up-to-date guidance has not been used when evaluating the residential provision's quality and effectiveness.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Demonstrate how residential staff are working towards a level 3 qualification within three months of starting employment.
- Evidence the joint working across school departments in meeting young people's needs.
- Consider using the most current guidance, namely the social care common inspection framework, when evaluating the residential provisions.

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Young people enjoy their residential experience and they are enthusiastic about their time at school. Those who may struggle or require a greater level of encouragement to engage are afforded this time by the committed staff team. Joint working across the team and with parents and specialist teams, such as speech and language and occupational therapy, provides effective assistance to help young people settle in the residential provision.

Parents are consistently positive regarding their child's experiences of staying at the school. They feel that they are able to access staff at any time and that their views are heard. They are welcome to visit the school at any time, and were seen during the inspection in both the residential area, and taking their children out for the evening.

Young people feel that they are listened to and that they are able to effect change. House meetings, student council and focus committees allow young people the opportunity to raise their views and share ideas. In addition, the recent implementation of 'boarding families' is embedding peer-to-peer support.

Young people are supported to understand how to lead healthy lifestyles. Displays in the dining room are interactive and demonstrate the nutritional aspect of certain foods, with a current focus on the amount of sugar in popular drinks. Some young people are engaged in 'food explorers' to try new types and textures of foods to help expand their diet. A wide range of physical activities are also on offer in the evening, alongside other stimulating and creative activities.

Young people's emotional well-being has become key to the residential experience, and is a priority across the school. Joint working with the therapies team has become more embedded for residential staff. Targeted sessions have seen a reduction in student sickness and better management of exam stress.

Young people learn skills for independence and adulthood through accessing the residential provision. This includes how to share and tolerate others, in addition to practical skills such as cooking, domestic chores and budgeting. There are plans to develop the sixth-form kitchen in order to promote independence further.

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the residential provision. They are confident in their surroundings and interactions with each other and staff. Those who struggle with identifying positive relationships and what being safe means are identified by staff, who offer help and guidance.

The well-being team, led by the designated safeguarding lead, has an excellent

understanding of the vulnerabilities of those in the school. Its members identify who may be at risk and require extra support. Records of liaison with partner agencies are clear and demonstrate a sound level of challenge if they feel that a service is not fulfilling its responsibilities. The chronologies maintained of safeguarding concerns and actions are clear. The safeguarding lead has settled well into her role, and has grown in confidence and knowledge.

Staff responses to behaviour are consistent across the school and young people know what is expected of them. The recently computerised records of behavioural interventions are well maintained. Senior residential staff meet weekly to analyse behaviour and responses, identifying trends, and who is currently needing more bespoke support. Risk assessments are regularly updated and reflect changes in behaviour. Physical intervention by staff is rarely used, and the headteacher provides robust oversight, including ensuring that records accurately reflect incidents.

Young people rarely go missing from the school. If a young person's whereabouts are unknown, the walkie-talkie system ensures a coordinated response in searching for them. Members of the senior team are aware of their roles in this instance.

Young people are supported to keep safe and do not raise bullying as an ongoing concern. Issues within peer groups are quickly noted and staff interventions are sound. Those who continue to struggle benefit from a targeted, multidisciplinary response. E-safety workshops are regularly undertaken with young people. It is recognised that this is an ever-evolving area, and the school endeavours to keep abreast of new concerns as they arise. All computers and devices have a link for young people to report inappropriate content or bullying online.

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

Leaders and managers are ambitious and have extremely high aspirations for the young people across the school. They are keen and committed to their roles. They have a key understanding of young people's progress and individual tracking is being updated and developed to make it easier to manage data and evaluate students' progress.

Staff are positive in their roles and say that they are well supported by senior staff. They feel listened to and that they have the training they need to meet the needs of those they care for. Staff who are new to role undertake a thorough induction, and say that they have been made welcome in the school. However, there is currently no system to ensure that they are working towards a level 3 or equivalent qualification within three months of employment.

Staff comment that at times they feel that day staff have better guidance and support when managing young people's behavioural needs. There is insufficient evidence of the involvement of residential staff, including seniors, in some joint planning meetings, which results in information being missed from plans.

There is sound evaluation in the monitoring of the residential provision against the national minimum standards. Minor shortfalls noted during the inspection may have been noted if the most current guidance, the social care common inspection framework, had been used.

The ethos, as set out in the residential provision's statement of principles, is adhered to and promoted. The physical environment is of a high standard, and young people feel that it is a homely place. Tolerance and difference are celebrated across the school. Young people, in general, are tolerant of each other's difference. Young people's views are sought and listened to.

## **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:** SC013927

**Headteacher/Teacher in charge:** Jonathan Hetherington

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

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