

Saxon Hill

Saxon Hill Special School, Kings Hill Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9DE

Inspection dates	1 March 2016 to 3 March 2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Children and young people make significant progress in their education, emotional health and independence skills. This progress is measureable and sustainable.
- Leaders and managers continually strive to improve the service and to provide children and young people with the best possible residential experience. They have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and take immediate action when shortfalls are noted.
- Children and young people's safety and security is prioritised in every aspect of the daily routines in the school and in residency. Effective partnership working between care staff, school staff and families means that safeguarding children is embedded in practice.
- Children and young people enjoy excellent relationships with residential staff. These relationships support their development and progress and enhance their feeling of safety.
- The views and experiences of children and young people are at the heart of residential practice. Consultation with them is a considerable strength of the service and ensures that the residential 'sleep-over' club continues to meet their needs.
- The school has a strong, highly qualified and experienced management team. Monitoring and review systems are robust and continually drive forward improvements to the service. These enhance children's life chances and opportunities.

- Children and young people are encouraged to form positive and long-lasting friendships with their peers, based on positive shared experiences, activities and interests.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of residential and welfare arrangements took place following the appropriate notice period for this type of visit. One inspector carried out the visit and reviewed the policies, documentation, residential provision and organisation over a period of three days. The inspector spoke to senior leaders, managers, key support staff, care staff and young people. Two evenings were spent in the residential accommodation observing staff and young people's interactions and activities. The inspector also joined young people for breakfasts and evening meals. In addition, the inspector sought feedback from parents and allocated professionals.

Inspection team

Jo Stephenson

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Saxon Hill converted to academy status in November 2015, becoming a member of the Shaw Education Trust. The school is for pupils with a wide range of physical, complex medical, associated sensory, communication and learning difficulties. Pupils are mostly from south Staffordshire. The school has a 14-bed unit called 'The Sleepover Club' that offers individually based overnight care to both male and female students of the school who are aged between five and 19 years. There is a dedicated team of care staff that operates independently of, but in close liaison with, the teaching and other staff. The sleeping accommodation comprises six twin bedrooms and two single rooms. There are 94 pupils on roll, of which 31 currently access overnight residential provision one night per week. The school was last inspected in July 2014.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Children's experience of residency is consistently positive. They thrive in this setting and make excellent progress in all aspects of their development. This is especially true in relation to their social interactions and independence skills. Children recognise their progress and celebrate their achievements. This enhances their self-esteem and confidence. One parent said, 'My child has made such wonderful strides towards independence and now does things I didn't think would be possible. I'm so proud.'

Individual progress and group achievements are effectively monitored. These are linked to the aims and objectives of residency and to children's personal plans. They demonstrate the positive impact that the service has on educational achievements and provide a record of tangible outcomes, taking account of research-based practice developments within the sector. This means that children, their families and other professionals recognise the benefits that accessing 'The Sleepover Club' has on children's personal growth and maturity. Residency is well organised and structured to provide children with a stable and positive experience.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are central to the daily routines in the setting and to the development of the service. Staff use a varied range of verbal and non-verbal communication aids to support children in expressing their opinions. Complaints are extremely rare but are always taken seriously and are quickly resolved. Parents and families praise the 'open and honest' approach of managers and residential staff, saying that they feel comfortable raising any 'grumbles' they have. One parent said, 'I can approach any member of staff with any concerns I may have. Parents are never dismissed, our views are always embraced.'

Relationships between children and residential staff are excellent. Relationships are based on mutual respect, understanding and trust. This promotes the children's safety. Safeguarding arrangements and procedures are robust and effective. Detailed individual, group and environmental risk assessments support these.

Children enjoy a wide range of social and educational activities when in residency. These include completing sessions that improve their independence skills, learning new social skills and furthering their personal hobbies and interests. Staff encourage children to try new activities to enhance their development. One child said, 'I love the things we do here and I love playing with my friends.'

Partnerships within the school and wider external services are exceptionally strong. For example, integrated healthcare means that children's health needs are met within school and residency. The seamless transfer of information between school and residency promotes children's safety and welfare, and means that they receive comprehensive and well-planned care.

Children and their families experience an in-depth and instructive introduction into residency. Timescales for transition are tailored to reflect children's individual needs and to take account of their wishes and opinions. Parents and carers are able to build suitable and supportive relationships with residential staff before children stay overnight. This helps to alleviate any anxieties that families may experience and enables children to settle quickly into the placement.

Staff know and understand the children very well and are extremely competent in meeting the children's complex needs. Internal care plans, health plans, support plans and risk assessments take account of children's privacy and dignity. They provide clear and detailed information for staff and promote children's emerging independence skills. Children's views and wishes are central to the internal care planning process. Staff are proactive in seeking children's feedback, using a range of verbal, non-verbal and pictorial communication methods. Children are treated with respect. They experience care and support that is sensitive and responsive to their individual needs. This promotes their self-esteem and confidence.

Children are encouraged to take an appropriate level of responsibility for their own health. For example, when picking their menu options, staff discuss the impact that food choice may have on their health. Menus are varied and they take account of children's food preferences, feeding plans and dietary needs. These are regularly reviewed to encourage children to try new foods and experience cuisine from different cultures.

Staff work closely with healthcare professionals, nursing services and families to promote children's physical, emotional and psychological health. When children take medication, staff endeavour to explain the purpose of this. Medication administration systems are extremely robust and well executed. This ensures that children only have access to their own medication, and it promotes their welfare and safety.

Parents consistently praise the quality of care provided in the residential provision. They appreciate the commitment, skills and knowledge of managers, and commend the dedication of the residential staff team. One parent said, 'I don't know where we would be without this service. We were on the brink but scared to trust others with our child. The staff worked with us and we took a leap of faith. It's the best decision we ever made. Our child is so happy and gets so much from "Sleepover" club'.

Children participate in a wide range of activities that combine learning opportunities with having fun and developing social skills. Activities are inclusive, well planned and well executed. Staff ensure that each evening there is a range of activities on offer to reflect children's individual preferences, skills and abilities. Children have easy access to a sensory room in residency and a large conservatory area for crafting and practical activities. They also benefit from access to school facilities such as the 'Rebound Room' outside of school hours.

The residential accommodation is well decorated and suitably maintained. It offers a well-equipped space that meets children's needs. Children are encouraged to personalise their rooms with posters, quilts and photographs. Corridors are decorated with pictures of children and staff and provide general information about the service, the means of making

a complaint and about advocacy services. The environment is warm, welcoming and child-focused. The homely and communal atmosphere supports the development of children's social interaction skills.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Children's safety and security is embedded in the ethos and culture of the school and residency. Internal policies and procedures are robust, regularly reviewed and consistently implemented. They are compatible with local authority and wider government good practice guidance and legislation. Staff have an excellent knowledge of safeguarding, including wider child protection considerations such as cyber-bullying, grooming, sexual exploitation and extremism. They are fully aware of how children's complex needs and vulnerabilities impact on their safety and welfare, and remain alert to the signs of abuse. All safeguarding concerns and considerations are immediately reported, referred and tracked. Named delegated officers liaise with external safeguarding professionals if and when necessary to ensure that there is a transparent and effective approach to maintaining children's safety.

Incidents of children displaying unacceptable or negative behaviours are very limited. They are respectful towards staff and each other. Relationships between children and staff are very positive, and children confirmed that they are aware of who they can speak with if they have any concerns or issues to raise. This includes easy access to independent advocacy services. The use of sanctions is extremely rare because children responded positively to verbal and signed interventions. There have been no incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection. Children do not report bullying to be an issue, although this topic is regularly discussed during residential meetings. This ensures that both staff and children remain vigilant to signs of bullying or intimidation. Children do not go missing from this school or residency but staff have a good understanding of the procedures to follow should this occur.

Recruitment procedures are robust and effective. Staff employed by the school are subject to disclosure and barring service checks and identification verification. Interview processes scrutinise any gaps in employment history and references are verified prior to individuals commencing employment. These processes further promote children's safety and welfare, and mean that they are not exposed to unsuitable adults.

Health and safety is well managed and the residential setting provides children with a safe environment. Senior site and facilities staff work in partnership with fire and rescue services, environmental professionals and equipment service engineers. Risks are identified and highlighted in risk reduction action plans. These promote children's safety and well-being. Environmental and specific activity risk assessments are cross-referenced to individual risk assessments in place for some children. This means that all known risks are continually considered and reviewed and ensures that staff are provided with accurate and detailed information relating to children's safety.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Outstanding

Leadership and management across the school and residency are exceptionally strong. The head of care is experienced, skilled and knowledgeable and is supported in her role by highly qualified and competent senior care staff. The management team has high expectations and aspirations for children. This 'can do' attitude prevails in all residential routines and has been assimilated by the wider care team. This means that children receive consistent care that supports their development.

Staff are skilled, committed and enthusiastic about ensuring that children receive the very best service and the highest quality of care possible. They have access to excellent training opportunities and are well supported in their role. Staff receive bespoke and specialist training specific to the needs of children, such as gastrostomy care. This means that staff have the right skills to support children with complex needs and makes the residential experience a safe and positive one for everyone using the service.

Monitoring and evaluating children's individual progress and the development of the setting is a considerable strength of the service. For example, a 'happiness audit' is ongoing to assess the impact that the service has on children who are unable to verbalise their likes and dislikes. This demonstrates the inclusive consultation processes that are in place to ascertain the views of those who access the service. As a result, the service continues to evolve and respond to children's changing needs.

The residential provision is an important part of this school. A named governor visits the provision regularly and completes a report for the governing body. This is supported by 'independent visitor' reports, peer monitoring visits and the 'continuum of skills tracker', which is used to measure children's progress against their personal academic and social targets. Together, these systems provide a robust monitoring tool for the management team and governors. This means that the senior management team has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting and takes effective actions to address any shortfalls. Operational policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and revised. This ensures that they are correctly implemented and that they continue to meet children's needs.

The head of care works in partnership with internal services, external professionals and families to ensure that children receive integrated care and support. Parents' feedback highlights the 'commitment and passion' shown by the head of care and recognises the positive impact this has on outcomes for children. One parent said about the head of care, 'Nothing is too much trouble, she will always do whatever she can to help and support us. I can tell that she genuinely cares for all of the children.'

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	142094
Social care unique reference number	SC038728
DfE registration number	

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	31
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	5 - 19
Headteacher	Jon Thickett
Date of previous boarding inspection	10 July 2014
Telephone number	01543 414892
Email address	headteacher@saxonhill.staffs.sch.uk

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