

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 are mostly from south Staffordshire. The school is located 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 of the school who 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 staff. The sleeping accommodation comprises six twin bedrooms and two single rooms. There are currently 98 children and young people on roll, of which 44 currently access overnight residential provision one night per week.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 January 2018

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: 7 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their residential experiences. They have lots of fun, try new experiences, make new friends, and make fantastic progress in many areas of their learning, social and independence skills, and in building their self-confidence.
- Staff go above and beyond to make sure that every child and young person has a memorable residential stay.
- Care staff ensure that children and young people have a sense of pride over their achievements.
- Staff place the safety and well-being of children and young people at the forefront of everything they do.
- Staff are extremely motivated to provide excellent care for all children and young people.
- All staff aim high to ensure that every child and young person is part of decisions over the running and development of the residential service.
- Children and young people's views and opinions matter and are used to improve and develop the residential service.
- Staff have lots of training and use research to help to inform their practice. This includes the introduction of dance massage and improving the use of sensory communication to give children and young people more say in things that matter.
- All national minimum standards are met.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Staff do not always ensure that care records include a date.
- Safeguarding records do not always include a date for when action should be taken.
- Children and young people's records are not always immediately accessible.
- The school has introduced a grumbles book, but has not referred to this in the complaints policy.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people thoroughly enjoy their stay at the sleepover club. They have fun, try new experiences, meet their friends, and make fantastic progress in many areas of their development. One young person told the inspector, 'I love it here and wish I could come more often.' Another child said, 'I love the staff, we have so much fun.' Parents are equally enthusiastic about the difference it makes to their child and family. One parent said, 'It is an absolutely fantastic service. Staff go above and beyond to make sure that [daughter] gets something from it. She loves it – seeing familiar places but doing something different. It makes such a difference to our whole family.'

Children and young people develop new skills, including self-care, independence and communication skills. Targets are identified in school and in the residential setting. The whole school approach means that work undertaken in sleepover club is often a continuation of the school day. There is excellent communication between residential and teaching staff. This means that children and young people continue to build upon the progress they make in class. Children and young people's experiences in the sleepover club add considerable value to their overall progress in education. For example, a school target may be that a young person learns how to hold a pencil. In the sleepover club, children and young people learn how to hold their toothbrush. Staff adapt targets appropriate to the child or young person. Consequently, children and young people continue to make substantial progress with skills, and their self-confidence grows.

Staff place the safety and well-being of children and young people at the forefront of all they do. They develop fantastic, nurturing relationships with each child and young person. The staff team are resourceful and imaginative. They involve all children and young people in activities that are appropriate to children and young people's needs. Staff practice includes using research, such as in the introduction of dance massage and improving sensory communication. In addition, they also work with speech and language therapists to help them to better understand individual children and young people's dietary needs. As a result, practice is continually evolving to meet the needs of all the children and young people who use the sleepover club.

Children and young people are sensitively welcomed to the sleepover club. For some, this takes a long time, and they may come for an extended day for many months before they feel confident enough to stay away from home overnight. In this way, children and young people are ready to embrace all opportunities offered by sleepover club.

Children and young people develop their confidence and express their views and ideas about many aspects of sleepover club's running. They join in regular meetings

with staff. Staff gain their views in a variety of ways. These include observation, advanced technology, signing, picture symbols and the spoken word. Children and young people develop patience and respect as they encourage others to express their views, and wait if it takes a little while to do so. As a result children and young people know that their views are important and that adults and peers listen to them.

Communication between staff, parents and professionals is exceptionally strong. Parents and social workers praised staff about the excellent levels of communication. One social worker told the inspector, 'It is a brilliant service and one where children find their voice. Staff are great in liaising with all people involved with the child, ensuring consistency and the best outcomes for children.'

Managers and staff work closely with the on-site nursing team. Children and young people benefit hugely from the comprehensive oversight of their health care. Staff are conscientious about ensuring that children and young people's health needs are clearly understood. Protocols and procedures are in place so that all staff know their responsibilities in relation to each child or young person. A nurse told the inspector, 'Staff are very careful and thorough in all they do.'

Children and young people stay in a vibrant, comfortable and homely environment. Each bedroom is suitably equipped to meet children and young people's individual needs. Children and young people enjoy a wonderful range of freshly cooked meals. Mealtimes are made a social occasion, giving children and young people the opportunity to engage in social interaction with friends and staff. The children and young people who need more specialist feeding systems are cared for by well-trained staff who understand children and young people's individual needs.

Managers and staff consistently plan ahead to meet older children's needs. For example, young people are helped to prepare to leave the sleepover club in preparation for leaving school. Young people discontinue their overnight stays but continue to have an extended day, with tea visits. In this way, the change is gradual and young people have time to adjust while maintaining links and friendships in the club.

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

Staff are meticulous about keeping children and young people safe. Risks posed to children and young people are well understood by all staff. Clear plans are in place with strategies to minimise any potential risks. Children and young people feel safe at the sleepover club. For example, one young person told the inspector that he waits for a member of staff to sit with him when he eats as it makes him feel safer, in case something happens.

Behaviour management is excellent. There have been no incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection. Managers ensure that sleepover house boundaries are clear and children and young people generally adhere to them.

Children and young people role model staff and peers, and this creates a calm and inclusive atmosphere enjoyed by all. If a child or young person's behaviour escalates, staff are exceptionally skilled and know when to step in and gently divert the negative behaviour, often using humour. With support and encouragement from staff, children and young people learn to manage their behaviour. One young person told the inspector that he sometimes loses his temper, but he knows when he is getting wound up and tries to stay calm. Staff in sleepover club use the relationships with teaching staff and parents well, and this helps to reinforce positive behaviour in all parts of school life.

This inspection found examples of innovative safeguarding practice at sleepover club. For example, very vulnerable children and young people are able to articulate how they feel safe, through the use of advanced communication aids. This enables children and young people to be able to express concerns, including if they feel bullied.

Since the last inspection, there have been no incidents of children and young people going missing from the residential service. Staff are constantly vigilant about children and young people's whereabouts and safety. In addition, there have been no incidents of children and young people being involved in radicalisation. All staff receive awareness training and are knowledgeable about how to keep children and young people safe.

The school site is physically safe and secure. Staff ensure that visitors are always monitored and chaperoned. Maintenance is of a high standard and any repairs are quickly completed. The site manager takes care to ensure that the grounds and premises are safe and secure, with good risk assessments in place.

Managers, staff and governors work together to promote children and young people's safety. Governors are sensitive towards individual children and young people's needs, and there is a dedicated governor for the sleepover club.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The head of care, school principal and senior leadership team work together to achieve excellent outcomes for children and young people attending the school. In line with their statement of purpose, all staff have an ambitious vision for each child or young person in their care. All staff want children and young people to develop and progress as far as they are able. The inclusive atmosphere of the school means that there is seamless communication between managers, staff, teachers and others, with the children and young people's safety and progress always in mind.

Managers use a variety of external and self-evaluation monitoring tools to evidence the significant progress made by children and young people in sleepover club. This includes feedback from an independent visitor, a residential governor, discussion with staff and parents, and feedback from children and young people. The leadership team is keen to drive improvement and develop the service further. These

arrangements help to maintain the high-quality care, and improved outcomes for children and young people.

Residential staff discharge their responsibilities in a manner that ensures that all children and young people are treated with dignity and respect. This approach means that children and young people develop these skills and are sensitive and courteous to others.

Handovers take place between residential and school staff at each end of the day. Staff complete home school books updating parents about their child's progress during the day and night. Close, daily liaison takes place with nursing and other healthcare staff to ensure that children and young people's health needs are thoroughly met.

The residential staff team is highly skilled and experienced. Many of the staff have worked at the school for many years. All staff are appropriately qualified or working towards the relevant qualification within the required timescale. Staff were highly complementary about the range of essential and specific training undertaken. Many training sessions are specific to individual children and young people's needs. The staff team receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. They told the inspector that support was always available from managers and colleagues.

The head of care has a realistic but comprehensive development plan for the residential service. This includes upgrading the residential kitchen, completing the KISS (keep, improve, stop and start) audit, which includes feedback from parents, young people and others, and improving home/school communication with parents.

This inspection found a small number of suggested improvements. Records are not always dated, which sometimes makes it difficult to see whether a document was the relevant one to review. Also, some records are not always immediately accessible. Some are in paper files and some are held electronically. This could potentially be confusing. The school has implemented a grumbles book, but has not referred to this in the complaints policy. Safeguarding records, although detailed overall, can sometimes miss out the date of when an action should be taken by. This can compromise the auditing of records when determining when action was taken.

The school has met the areas for improvement noted at the last inspection. The impact of the residential provision on children and young people's progress in education is included in the six-monthly review. Managers have made improvements in the safer recruitment process and references are always verified. References are also sought when appointing governors. These measures promote the safety of all children and young people attending the school.

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

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Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Julia Wright, social care inspector (lead)

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