

The Grange Therapeutic School

15-17 Somerby Road, Knossington, OAKHAM, Leicestershire LE15 8LY

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school is an independent residential special school for 73 boys aged eight to 18 years, 15 of whom can reside at the school during the week. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses, one of which is located on the school site. The second is located in the village of Knossington, a short walk from the main school building. The school is situated in a rural location close to the town of Oakham in Leicestershire. The school caters for students who have social, emotional and mental health needs, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorders and mild learning difficulties. The residential provision was last inspected in January 2018.

Inspection dates: 29 to 30 January 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 30 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Extremely high-quality leadership ensures consistent development.
- Young people are always at the centre of the school's focus. Leaders do not give up on them and are tremendously committed to their welfare.
- Young people leave the school with plans for their future. Their life chances are significantly improved. Young people progress successfully to work or college placements. This is extremely positive, given some young people's starting points.
- Young people experience high-quality care. They thoroughly enjoy the personalised education curriculum and their residential experience.
- There are very trusting relationships between young people and staff. Young people can rely on staff for support and direction, which they readily accept.
- Young people live in a community where they are well respected by each other, staff and the neighbours in the local area.
- Very close working with families makes sure that young people are safer at home as well as at school.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- When young people share bedrooms, the risks need to be fully considered through the school's risk assessment process.
- The role of the designated night staff needs to be clarified so that young people are checked according to their needs.
- Leaders need to regularly ask young people about all aspects of their experiences, including the food at lunchtime.
- Further to this inspection, managers already have some plans of their own in place. They plan to improve safeguarding training for leaders. Also, when staff have a formal meeting with their manager they plan to make sure that the records are improved.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that young people are asked about their enjoyment of food at lunchtime in school. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 17)
- Ensure that when young people share a bedroom, the risks have been well considered and reduced, through the use of written risk assessments. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 6)
- Ensure that the night awake staff are clear about their role and about the regularity and nature of checks on young people during the night. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 15)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are very positive and beneficial relationships between staff and young people. The staff team is very stable and young people know what to expect from the team. Staff are very good role models for young people, and there is always someone who young people can identify to help them, to support them and to make them laugh.

Young people's experiences are very positive. They are fully accepted in the local community. They have recently been involved in making and laying poppies for Armistice day, fundraising for young refugees, and litter picking. Young people develop a sense of belonging. They learn about themselves and what they like and enjoy. They find new confidence and develop skills when they try the variety of activities on offer. There are holidays, expeditions, trips out and a wide range of activities on offer to suit each young person's needs and interests.

Education is highly individualised and brings about a change in attitude to education. The curriculum is wide and vocational. For example, young people learn through fishing, woodwork and attending college in the local community. Data suggests that young people achieve better results if they attend the residential provision.

Young people are well prepared for when they leave. Recently, for one young person there has been a gradual reduction in school days and an introduction into their workplace. Staff care about this transition as any good parent would. They worry about young people arriving safely when they use public transport, and regularly discuss the plans with them. They help young people to prepare for job applications. They take young people back to their home area for interviews to support them. This support is valuable and young people are more confident because of it. The majority of young people go on to be very successful in their new placements.

The home's therapeutic ethos is well embedded. Young people are helped to come to terms with why they are at the school and their past trauma and difficulties.

Young people have a voice in the school. However, some young people's negative views about the food at lunchtime have not yet been represented. It is acknowledged that these views are more about personal choice rather than the quality of the food.

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

There are several areas of particularly good practice. The very positive relationships that school staff have with parents help to protect young people. This also has a positive impact on their family life when they are at home. The developing ethos regarding behaviour management is bringing about progress in staff practice. The introduction of restorative justice advocates in the staff team has enabled staff to understand and support young people better when they struggle to regulate their behaviour. There are many examples of young people who have made particularly

good progress with their behaviour. There is a demonstrable reduction in the number of physical interventions. Given the starting points for some young people, this is particularly positive. One young person was proud to comment on his progress on this, saying: 'I have lowered my anger problems.'

There are extremely positive relationships between staff and young people. Young people have complete confidence that staff will help them and protect them when they have an issue, worry or concern. Because of these relationships, young people readily accept help, advice and direction. They develop a stronger sense of safety.

Young people feel very safe. Staff protect them well and are very clear about the procedures they should follow. Staff report that they feel confident to tell their manager or any of the designated safeguarding leads in the school whenever there is a safeguarding concern. There are some gaps in the leaders' understanding of the finer details of safeguarding procedures. In particular, the difference between an early intervention and a safeguarding referral needs to be better understood. However, they demonstrated a commitment to further training to strengthen their safeguarding procedures.

At night, there is a designated member of staff who remains awake. There is some confusion over their role and over the regularity of checks that they are supposed to undertake. For example, the records do not show how young people are checked. For one young person, the checks were not regular enough.

There are four young people who share a bedroom. Their risk assessments do not extend to the thinking behind this, nor do they capture the additional risks and potential vulnerabilities posed by the young people to each other.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The headteacher of the school is an inspirational leader. He has been in post for two years now and has made significant improvements. Young people said: 'He is brilliant', 'so nice' and 'funny'. He shows incredible skill in managing the pace of change. Changes are carefully considered. He has ensured that all staff understand the reasons for change and that there is a shared belief and understanding in the school's ethos. A creative and innovative approach has brought excitement and enthusiasm to the leadership team, and all are motivated by young people's progress.

The headteacher is very well supported by two senior staff who are the residential house leaders. Parents make very positive comments about the leaders, such as: '[The member of staff] is like a second mum.' Together, the leaders are very aware of the strengths and areas for development. They are secure in their knowledge that residence has an extremely positive impact on young people. They build on what they are good at and the pace of development continues to escalate. The school is going from strength to strength.

Some developments are highly innovative. For example, there has been a total refocus of behaviour management techniques. This has included deeper thinking about the reasons for behaviour, and a new restorative approach. There are also improvements to therapy. Leaders positively influence the practice of other professionals and their work goes well over and above what is ordinarily required. For instance, they have positively influenced several local authorities to secure another year of residential provision, when they know this would considerably add value to the young person's education and/or welfare.

Leaders never lose their clear and absolute focus on young people. Whatever challenges they face or whatever their behaviour, young people know that leaders believe in them, care about them and want the best for them. They learn to aim high and feel more confident about their future because of this approach.

The independent visitor adds additional, valuable scrutiny. She visits and reports on each residential area very regularly. Young people enjoy her visits and look forward to them, readily telling her about their experiences. All leaders are aware of the direction of travel and the tremendous and positive impact that the residence has on the young people. Recently, there has been significant change in the governing body, but its oversight has remained smooth, focused and highly effective.

The one recommendation made at the last inspection under the national minimum standards is met. Additionally, all other recommendations are met, demonstrating the school's commitment to improvement.

Staff training is extensive and there are lots of opportunities for support and direction. Staff supervision records are basic in nature and do not always reflect this outstanding judgement. Leaders are committed to this area for development.

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: SC001831

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Ollie Sharp

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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