

Woodeaton Manor School

Woodeaton Manor School, Woodeaton, Oxford OX3 9TS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Woodeaton Manor is a special day and residential school for 84 day pupils aged seven to 18 years who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The vast majority of the children have autistic spectrum disorder. There are 10 residential placements, which are available for four days a week during term time only. Children usually attend once a week. The aims of the residential experience are to extend a child's social network, to develop their independence and to enable them to try new experiences.

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 December 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 **good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 26 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff provide a high quality of individualised care and support for children, taking account of their particular needs. As a result, all the children spoken to look forward to their stays.

Pupils have a wider range of opportunities than would otherwise be available at the school. A typically busy evening was observed during the inspection. Pupils could choose to play football, shop for snacks, choose food from a takeaway, watch a DVD, use public transport, buy craft materials, make Christmas decorations or play console games together. During these activities, staff take the opportunity to talk to children about healthy choices, obtaining value for money, friendships and who to talk to if they have a concern.

Staff take pupils' views into account so that these views shape pupils' experiences. For example, the setting of breakfast tables is now at a more agreeable time for the pupils. Pupils feel listened to and this, in turn, maintains a calm atmosphere. Staff plan activities with the children so they know what will be happening the following week. Pupils benefit from certainty in their routines and enjoy the structure.

The governor who visits on behalf of the board also provides the independent person role to pupils. However, this is poorly publicised, and she was not well known to the pupils. Following her visit, the governor had written a summary of her visit for children to read. Furthermore, the head of care produced a poster to inform pupils of her role, with the aim of raising her profile. Information regarding helplines and organisations outside the school is available but not prominently so. Furthermore, the information does not include the contact details for the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Many of the pupils, their parents or carers and the staff spoke about how pupils benefit from their stays. This includes the chance to socialise, try new experiences and learn self-care skills. One parent said that their son 'used to be frightened by other children, but here he has learned to be around them in a normal, laid-back way and feels safe.' Progress is therefore evident but is not well recorded. However, the head of care has designed a system to track children's development, which he intends to introduce shortly.

Care plans are, on the whole, detailed. They do lack specific detail about how cultural and religious needs will be met. For example, they do not address pupils' understanding of living in a multicultural society. Nevertheless, during the inspection the head of care dealt with the uninformed remarks of a pupil well. This gave the child an alternative view and demonstrated an ability to address diversity issues without being confrontational.

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

School leaders and staff identify potential safeguarding and welfare concerns well. Managers methodically monitor progress with all concerns, engaging with other agencies and track their actions to alleviate risks to children.

Although risks are known and addressed in the residential provision, staff do not always clearly identify them in written assessments. Few of the documented risks have corresponding guidance about strategies to mitigate them, or information on what might trigger heightened concerns. This means that new staff, in particular, may be unaware of these issues.

The school's educational psychologist has led the creation of a programme to help children be aware of their rights and responsibilities. This has been in conjunction with local schools and voluntary and statutory agencies. It addresses issues such as being a victim, domestic abuse, exploitation, and carrying a weapon. Pupils are now clearer about their rights which, in turn, empowers them and gives them confidence.

The premises manager oversees health and safety and has rigorously followed through on the advice and recommendations from various consultants. However, the gradual deterioration in the condition of concrete and paving has not been identified. This means that there is a potential trip hazard because of uneven surfaces.

Medication arrangements are not fully effective. There are no logs kept of stock or of medication that comes in and out with the pupils staying in the residential provision. This means that there is the potential for medication to be missed or subject to administration error. The head of care resolved this during the inspection.

Staff talk through children's misbehaviour with them rather than impose sanctions, involving parents if required. This is effective and pupils are keen to get on well with each other and with staff. Restrictive physical interventions are rare, due to the way activities are structured and staff's acute awareness of signs that a child may be struggling. During the inspection, the head of care's quick reaction prevented a conflict between two pupils from becoming more volatile. This not only avoided the possible need for a physical intervention but also gave other pupils confidence that staff keep everyone safe.

Staff help pupils to manage anxieties by giving them constant reassurance and reminders of what will be happening during the evening. This consistent and patient approach enables children to maintain their involvement in activities. Risky behaviour reported in other settings, such as absconding or getting involved in physical altercations, very soon stops – if it occurs at all.

Pupils and their families praised residential staff for the lengths they will go to in order to support children and to ensure their safety. One parent said, 'They deal with safeguarding really well. The head of care particularly takes it very seriously.' This means that children feel well cared for and secure.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care has a level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare and is currently studying for the level 7. Leaders and managers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve.

Currently, the head of care is supported by staff who predominantly work in the school during the day but also have one shift a week in the residential provision. This means that a large proportion of the day-to-day work, such as running each shift and writing care plans, is in the hands of the head of care. This leaves the service vulnerable if he is unavailable. There are plans to change the structure to have more dedicated staff, including a permanent deputy post.

In the interim, staff starting in the residential provision have not had an induction to the role. Even though they are very experienced with working with children with complex needs, there are gaps in their knowledge. One example is the circumstances in which they may use restraint in residential situations. The school's positive handling policy does not distinguish between the legitimate use of reasonable force to maintain good discipline in the classroom but not in the residence. However, staff have only used restraint once, to prevent harm, since the last inspection.

The head of care has developed a supervision format that ensures that the focus is on meeting children's needs and is reflective on practice. However, the head of care's own consultations with the headteacher are not structured as formal supervision. This means that they do not record discussions, decisions or actions.

The board of governors regularly considers the residential provision and demonstrates appropriate challenge. This has resulted in changes in policy and procedures. The nominated governor for residence now visits six times a year and produces a report. This goes to the head of care, the headteacher and the chair of governors, but not all governors. The report describes the observations of the governor but is not evaluative and has not resulted in any recommendations. It therefore has limited value in promoting continuous improvement.

The school does not produce an annual review of the operation and resourcing of the residential provision. Although much of the required information is known and discussed, it is not compiled in a comprehensive format and does not include a systematic assessment of compliance with the national minimum standards.

What does the residential special school need to do to

improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 20.4 The head teacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

Recommendations

- Information available to pupils about the independent person and appropriate helplines or outside contact numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, is regularly reviewed and kept up to date.
- Records are kept of all medication stocked in the residential provision, together with logs of medication brought into and leaving the provision.
- Paths and walkways are regularly monitored for potential trip hazards.
- The school's positive handling policy makes it clear that restraint, including reasonable force, in the residential provision is only used to prevent any injury to a person (including the child), or to prevent serious damage to property (including the child's). This means that the purpose to 'maintain good discipline' applies only to the school setting.
- Care plans provide sufficient guidance on how staff are to meet children's cultural and religious needs, and reflect children's wishes and feelings.
- School staff who start work in the residential provision are given an induction to this role.
- Supervision for the head of care should have a formal structure and be recorded.
- Each member of the governing body is given a copy of monitoring visit reports.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC013056

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Simon Bishop

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01865 558722

Email address: head.7002@woodeaton.oxon.sch.uk

Inspector

Chris Peel, social care inspector



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