

# 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 School is a special day and residential school for 91 day pupils aged seven to 18 years. 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. Twenty different children 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.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### **Inspection dates: 12 to 14 October 2021**

**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:** 2 December 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children make good progress with their social and individual skills through attending the residential provision. They enjoy a relaxed residential environment where they can try new activities and experiences. Children like the staff, who are attentive to their needs, allowing them freedom while being available at all times. Children are able to choose who they want to share a bedroom with and this can be changed if it is required. Parents speak highly about the positive experiences their children have in the residential provision. They have recognised the significant improvements that their children are making in the social and independent aspects of their lives. The children are seen as individuals with specific needs, who are helped to be able to fit into the group.

Children feel listened to. Staff seek their views through group meetings and individual discussions. Children come together as a group the week before to decide each stay's activities and meal choices. The head of care has improved the process for seeking children's views on wider issues, as the original group approach was not effective for all children. This has included general discussion while travelling in the car, for example. It has been identified that these ad hoc discussions should be recorded in the same detail as formal meetings. This has not been happening routinely.

Links with education are clear and most of the residential staff also work in the school. The consistency across the teams ensures smooth changes between school time and residential time. Children are helped to work through any issues during the school day with the residential staff.

A range of socially and emotionally stimulating activities helps children to explore beyond their usual choices. Activities include trampolining, using adventure playgrounds where children learn to share equipment, playing football and being part of a team, and sharing a living space. Children learn independent skills such as shopping and cooking for themselves, alongside developing personal care and independence skills. Children learn how to manage in group situations, such as sharing and tolerating others in their space. Progress includes two children helping each other to make their beds. Children are supported to engage in new and meaningful activity during normal day-to-day routines. For example, a child was assembling a flat-pack table over breakfast, learning a valuable life skill.

Children are helped to understand healthy living and what this means for them. This includes trying different foods, as well as them understanding their own physical and emotional well-being needs. The school's educational psychologist has a key understanding of each child's needs, supporting staff in how to best to meet those needs. Support from partner agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services, is sought as needed. Some health and welfare plans are not sufficiently clear. For example, one child's plan did not guide staff about how to respond should

the child have a seizure, although, when asked, all staff knew how to respond should this happen.

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

Children show that they feel safe in the residential provision. They are confident in approaching staff when they are feeling anxious, or for general help and interaction. Staff have a strong understanding of each child's specific vulnerabilities and do all they can to protect children from risk. Staff are clear about how to respond to safeguarding concerns, using the organisation's web-based safeguarding reporting tool.

Joint working with partner agencies is excellent. Referrals to partner agencies are swift, with a clear chronology of events. The response to a developing exploitation and grooming child protection concern during the inspection demonstrated swift action to protect the children involved. Oversight and reflection of responses to concerns are of good quality. The new safeguarding governor is motivated and has a wealth of relevant experience that she will bring to the role.

Children learn how to be safe online. Staff help them to understand when it is safe to share information and who it is safe to share it with, guided by an online education pack. In addition, the school's web monitoring filter allows for a quick response to any issues. The screenshot function picks up any concerning words. Records show immediate interventions to help children if they are writing about or searching for anything of concern. Children at risk of grooming and radicalisation are helped to understand what others may be trying to encourage them to believe or do.

Staff recognise all behaviour as communication. The educational psychologist takes a prominent lead in supporting staff to meet children's emotional needs and consider what their actions are communicating. Staff act quickly to address any upset or distress. They make sure children can process changes in activities to reduce the impact of change and endings. Staff use their relationships with children to calm situations, while letting the children know they have been listened to. Staff engage children to reflect on their actions and consider how best to manage similar concerns in the future. The use of physical intervention is rare. Records show the need for the intervention and responses after the incident. Children rarely go missing from the school. The swift response when a child went missing during the inspection involved a coordinated plan, with staff remaining close to the child and encouraging him to return.

The quality of the environment is not always as good as it should be. Recommendations to give one of the residences a deep clean before children stayed there again had not been acted on. Health and safety is well managed and children are protected from avoidable risk. Walk-through fire practice evacuations, without sounding the alarm, mean children know how to respond, without the negative sensory impact.

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

Leaders and managers are aspirational for all the children across the school, as are the residential staff. The head of care is constantly striving to improve the outcomes for children through developing all aspects of the residential provision. All staff are proud of the children's accomplishments, both academically and socially. While staff are able to talk about children's progress, children's plans do not readily show the progress they are making against their targets. Additionally, plans are not concise and information is spread across various records, meaning that essential information could be missed.

Children's needs are central to how the school runs. The school provides a nurturing environment where children are able to express themselves and be safe. Staff take into account children's current sensitivities and go beyond expectations to ensure children do not feel isolated. For example, staff help children who cannot manage the classroom environment, allowing them space and freedom to walk the grounds and speak to other staff. Joint working with partner agencies is a strength across the school. Staff are confident in challenging agencies if they do not feel they are providing a suitable service for children, always championing children's needs.

Staff say they are happy in their roles and feel well supported by the leaders in the school, particularly the head of care. They have the training they require to meet children's specific needs and most of the residential team are now undertaking level 3 qualifications. Appraisals provide a sound reflection tool for staff to identify their areas for development. Supervision has been sporadic due to the impact of COVID-19 and not all supervision has been on a one-to-one basis.

The regular monitoring of the residential service provides a sound basis for improving the service. Governors' residential reports provide good oversight and challenge for managers and leaders. Despite that, reviews by both governors and senior leaders lack detailed evaluation. The educational psychologist evaluated the impact of the pandemic on the children and the school as a whole and detailed what measures needed to be put in place to support children to adjust.

## **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 standard for residential special schools:

- Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors. (NMS 22.1)

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should develop a system to ensure there is an acceptable level of tidiness and cleanliness in the residential cottages.

## **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

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## **Inspectors**

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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