

# Vale of Evesham School

Vale of Evesham School, Four Pools Lane, EVESHAM, Worcestershire, WR11 1BN

## Inspection dates

01/02/2016 to 03/02/2016

## 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

- Communication and behaviour management are exceptional strengths and worthy of dissemination to other schools and services.
- The residential experience enables pupils to make excellent progress in their educational, personal, and social development. They grow in confidence, try new opportunities and exude enjoyment when they stay at the residential setting.
- Celebration of individuality is integral to the running of the service. Children and young people's personalities shine through; they look out for each other and enjoy extremely positive relationships.
- Proactive and detailed communication with parents and agencies promotes robust and an all-inclusive approach to safeguarding.
- Care planning embraces all aspects of children and young people's culture, language, individual preferences and communication challenges. Highly personalised care and close consultation with parents meets the intricate and often complex needs of each child and young person.
- Excellent understanding of learning disability, subsequent behaviours and attention to detail ensures effective risk management. As a result children and young people develop a strong sense of self-determination, grow in self-esteem and become increasingly independent.
- Parents say they, 'I cannot fault them and I feel I am so fortunate to have this opportunity', 'I couldn't find anyone better to look after my child' and 'Top marks from us.'
- Leaders and staff are ambitious in their constant drive for improvement; they consistently look for new ideas, research, training opportunities and greater partnership working. These highly motivated leaders and staff develop confident children and young people who are enthusiastic about learning and strive to reach their potential

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain a running count for the central stock of paracetamol.
- Sign and date all telephone verifications of references.

## **Information about this inspection**

This inspection was completed by one inspector following a two-hour notice period. Time was spent over two days in the residential accommodation and several children and young people contributed their views and experiences and helped with a tour of the accommodation. A range of care, staffing and health and safety records were examined. Discussions were held with members of the management team, care staff, the designated safeguarding officers, parents, the school nurse and other external professionals.

## **Inspection team**

Elaine Cray

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

The school is an academy and is directly responsible to a governing body. Vale of Evesham School provides education for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and learning disabilities. The school caters for 175 pupils in total. The residential service operates from Monday to Friday and can accommodate up to 15 students. There were 11 children and young people receiving a service at the time of the inspection and their age range was 10 to 16 years. The school's last inspection was in March 2015.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding**

Children and young people make excellent progress as a result of their residential experiences. They have an extremely positive view of the setting because they make friends, have nice bedrooms, improve behaviour, develop social skills and enjoy a range of exciting and personally chosen activities. Children and young people live in a harmonious residential community. They have excellent respect for house rules such as 'gentle hands and kind words' and there are no concerns about bullying.

Children and young people are unanimous about activities being their favourite part about the residential provision. Their excitement about going out on trips to the park, swimming and playing in the gym is clear to see. They also refer to a range of photos and displays to show staff and visitors how they enjoy going to theme parks, boating and tend to the vegetable garden. Activities also include going shopping and making meals. Children and young people across all abilities, have responsibility in choosing, shopping and preparing a meal. This interactive and sharing experience enables excellent practical and social skills.

Mealtimes and helping in the dining room provide a great opportunity to socialise and further develop social skills. Children and young people feel good about themselves as they pour drinks for others, serve their own food and use cutlery for the first time. They learn to choose different foods and take pride in new skills like spreading their own toast. Attention to detail shines though as staff are quick to reinforce the smallest effort and skill. Mealtimes are an extremely positive time for all children and young people and manners were exceptional throughout this inspection.

Children and young people develop a meaningful understanding of their own health. They talk about healthy eating, including growing and eating lots of fruit and vegetables. They also understand that activities are fun but also important because exercise and fresh air are good ways to stay healthy. Personal hygiene routines are an important part of the residential experience and children and young people take great pride in their personal appearance.

Consultation is strong, meaningful and empowers children and young people. Leaders and staff go to extensive lengths to provide an array of communication processes. Children and young people routinely use symbols, pictures, signs and new verbal skills to make sense of their surroundings, express their views and help others understand their needs. They have a strong sense of belonging and self-worth because staff listen and act on their ideas about activities, personalising their bedrooms and how they like to be supported.

Children and young people refer to their simple yet very informative care and communication profiles to tell others about themselves, what they can do and what help they need. Young people's individuality, strengths and independence shines from the profiles and further demonstrates this empowering and child-centred environment.

Parents are extremely proud of their children's achievements. They value the positive

impact on their children's education and social development; but also the positive impact on family life. They are pleased because their children now help out at home. Improved behaviour means the whole family can now go shopping or out for a meal. Parents also value how the residential provision has given their children greater dignity with improvements in toileting and personal hygiene. Some children have made special friendships and parents say this would not have been possible without the residential experience.

Attention to detail means children and young people are calmer and less anxious. For example, favourite sensory beads and routinely updating individual communication charts prepare children and young people for transition to and from school and different activities. They enjoy interactive activities, such as board games because staff are adept at diverting and regulating children and young people from some of their repetitive and solitary behaviours. Having a foot massage while talking about challenges of the school day is an excellent approach to de-escalating anxiety and thoroughly enjoyed by the children and young people.

Children and young people experience high levels of safety, stability and security. Their relationships with staff are exceptionally strong. They make significant progress because staff have in-depth perceptiveness into their needs, anxieties and behaviour. Children and young people learn, relax and socialise in the structured and extremely nurturing residential setting.

### **The quality of care and support**

### **Outstanding**

Residential care is of a very high standard due to successful transition planning. Staff work patiently and tenaciously to build partnerships with children, young people and their families. Parents are very positive about the bespoke transition plans. They say visits to the service and meetings with staff quickly reassure them and their comments include, 'the staff are brilliant at communicating and sharing information.' Staff clearly value and embrace relationship building so children and young people settle well and parents are confident their children are cared for and safe.

Excellent partnership working between residential staff, children, young people, families, school nurse and education staff promotes holistic, wrap around care for children and young people. Behaviour, communication, education and health dovetail into practical care plans which significantly enhance the physical and emotional well-being of the children and young people.

Behaviour support is measured and strategic. All children and young are fully motivated by the incentives they receive for trying hard, doing school work and helping the staff and other children. There is a clear focus on children and young people reaching their potential and to become as independent as possible. For example, excellent visual referencing and signage around the home is used by all the children and young people to make sense of their surroundings, manage behaviour and to help with routines. This empowers children and young people as they can be independent and make their own decisions.

Monitoring is robust with a central focus on the impact of the care planning framework. Quality of care is outstanding because leaders, managers and independent visitors routinely check young people's health care plans, communication profiles and engagement in education. There is exceptional attention to detail throughout care practices and monitoring processes. The service has consistent success in developing children and young people's potential because the care planning framework builds on routine and reviews children and young people's progress.

Monitoring and promoting the health of children and young people is commendable. The school nurse and residential staff work enthusiastically to promote good health; including sexual health awareness. There is high regard for young people's mental and emotional health, with access to an educational psychologist and good connection to the children and adolescent mental health services. Complex medical needs such as epilepsy are effectively managed. Robust medication procedures protect children and young people's medical and health needs. Making a record of central paracetamol stock is an area for improvement.

Care strategies are meaningful and individualised because parents make a significant contribution to the plans. Staff's child centred skills sensitively meets the diverse and complex needs of children and young people. Staff use their knowledge about the smallest but important quirks and preferences to get the best connection and outcomes for children and young people. Working in partnership, regular communication and review ensures meaningful assessment, effective support and successful outcomes for children and young people.

Children and young people stay in well-maintained and comfortable surroundings. Individually personalised bedrooms enable children and young people to feel settled and have a positive sense of belonging during their stay.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

**Outstanding**

Safeguarding lies at the heart of the school. Proactive and detailed communication with parents and agencies promotes robust and an all-inclusive approach to safeguarding children and young people.

Safeguarding training is rigorous and extends throughout the staff team. Practice is outstanding because leaders keep abreast of developments in guidance and provide effective training for all staff. For example, the school's safeguarding procedures and training includes the risks of radicalisation and the ongoing challenges of E-safety.

Leaders and staff are constantly alert and sensitive to the needs and vulnerabilities of children and young people. They are extremely skilled in identifying and connecting the smaller picture of the risks facing children and young people. Prompt and effective identification and referral of child protection concerns promotes safety both inside and outside the provision. No safeguarding or child protection matters have occurred at the school since the last inspection and no referrals to the local designated officer have been necessary.

Changes in behaviour and potential safeguarding concerns, no matter how small, have a pivotal part in staff meetings and also weekly reviews by the three designated safeguarding leads in the school and residential setting.

There are no concerns about children and young people going missing or child sexual exploitation. Focused work on stranger danger helps children and young people promote their own safety. On this inspection, one young person gave advice to the inspector about not talking to strangers or accepting a lift in a car by someone you do not know.

Recruitment procedures include a range of pre-employment checks including criminal record vetting that is renewed every three years. References are obtained and verified but evidence of who and when this is done is not always consistently recorded. This is an administrative shortfall. Overall the school ensures robust procedures are followed so that only suitable adults get to work with children.

Bespoke behaviour management plans, staff training and rigorous monitoring of behaviour management ensure children and young people experience excellent support and improvement in their behaviour. Proactive and meaningful behaviour strategies positively impact because staff understand children and young people's triggers, communication processes and anxieties.

Comprehensive risk assessment and practical risk management identifies concerns and effective responses to children and young people's challenges and behaviours. Strategies to manage these concerns focus on safety but also ensure all pupils have opportunities to reach their potential and achieve. For example, staff give detailed attention to staffing levels, group dynamics and transport arrangements to ensure all children and young people can safely enjoy going out. Individual risk assessments and behaviour plans mean no child or young person is excluded from activities and this includes eating out in restaurants.

Managers and staff competently input and use an online system where they can analyse and evaluate incidents and responses to difficult and risky behaviours. Excellent staff training and positive behaviour management leads to infrequent use of physical intervention, and only as a last resort and to protect children and young people. Records are accountable and usefully monitor patterns and trends to inform and improve staff support and practice.

Regular review of risk management promotes constant evaluation of children and young people's safety both inside and outside the residential setting. They are safe and secure due to meticulous monitoring of health and safety. Security measures are thorough with secure perimeters and combination locking devices. Holding fire drills during residential time enable children, young people and staff to know what to do in the event of a fire.

## **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Outstanding**

Leadership is strong and children and young people receive excellent care due to a well-trained and cohesive staff team. The residential provision is well managed by an

experienced and suitably qualified head of care. The head of care is part of the school's senior leadership team and is directly supervised and supported by the head of school. Parents' comments about the staff 'They are the loveliest people – smiley and the happiest' and they are 'All on the same page.'

The statement of principles and purpose of the residential provision are clear and staff and parents understand the role of residential in improving children's outcomes. Leaders and staff are extremely proud that the residential service provides opportunity, supports the school curriculum and makes significant contribution to children and young people's potential.

Leaders and staff have high aspirations for children and young people. The head teacher says 'my guiding principle is that if it is not good enough for my own child then it is not good enough for these children.'

Children, young people, parents, carers and professionals receive good information about the service. The school's website, prospectus and child-friendly welcome guide provides up to date information about caring and keeping children and young people safe at the provision.

Partnership working is extremely effective and professionals have an extremely positive view of the service and the skill set of the staff. Their comments include, 'Fantastic. They are open to listening and being creative' and 'empathetic people and natural altruism.'

Staff practice is consistent and successful due to a well-embedded framework of policies and procedures. Leaders and staff are up to date with the legislative and regulatory framework and use this as a useful evaluation tool. Governor's regularly audit the residential provision against the national minimum standards. Leaders and staff embrace these monitoring processes. This self-reflective team are keen to improve the already excellent standards in the provision.

All staff embrace opportunities for professional development and to improve the service. Children and young people receive excellent support and practice is contemporary because staff receive extensive training.

Children and young people's views are very important to staff. Advocacy is developing with visitors making several visits and getting to know the children and young people. Leaders and staff are keen to ensure children and young can express their views outside of the school.

Participation within the setting is also a strong theme. Children and young people can now raise their ideas and get feedback across all levels in the school. The head teacher and head of care now attend the residential forums at the request of the children and young people. Children and young people are also represented on the fundraising committee. They are very proud about helping to create their own merchandise and raised £280.00 from making jam, fudge, Christmas tree decorations and jewellery.

Effective staffing arrangements are key to the excellent outcomes for children and young people. Close supervision, effective organisation of activities, structured routines and

safeguarding protocols promote safety. Staff enthusiasm, energy and communication skills are praiseworthy and the main contributor to the sheer joy experienced by the children and young people.

Well-maintained records promote excellent care and effective accountability for staff practice. Records provide meaningful information about the pupils experience, achievements and progress. Parents particularly value the photos that are now added their children's home-to-school diaries.

Effective and regular monitoring systems maintain excellent standards and drive improvement. Practice improves because leaders and managers use patterns and trends to evaluate behaviour, progress and the impact of staff practice. The staff quote, 'The service doesn't stand still – always asking how we can up this' sums up the motivational approach by the leadership and staff team and reinforces the outstanding nature of the service.

Leaders use research to improve practice and outcomes for children and young people. The 'Thrive' programme provides individual assessment based on attachment theory and life events from pregnancy to adult life. No individual children and young people in the residential provision require such as assessment but the 'Thrive' co-ordinator works with residential staff to create group targets. Monitoring the impact is built into the process and shows residential children and young people are doing well. New group activities and interactions, such as memory based games, enable staff to look at children and young people's emotional resilience and skills in a different way and try different approaches. They are excited as they now identify new emerging abilities and qualities for children, young people and quality of their own practice.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139444
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC043049
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	15
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	10 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Garside
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/03/2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01386 443367
<b>Email address</b>	stephengarside@advancetrust.org

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