

Notton House School

Notton School House, 28 Notton, Lacock, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2NF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school provides education for boys aged eight to 19 years with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and/or speech, language and communication difficulties. There are 39 residential spaces, and all are currently filled. The residential accommodation is all on the school site. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 September 2024

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: 7 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Inspectors spent two evenings with children in the residential provision, meeting and speaking to many of them. In addition, an inspector met with some members of the school council.

Children enjoy attending the residential provision at this school. They benefit from a range of opportunities and interesting activities, while being supported by a consistent group of staff.

Children enjoy positive and warm relationships with staff. Staff plan well for children's evening activities and proactively spend time with them. Children enjoy trips out to the cinema, kayaking and fishing. At school, they can enjoy gaming, football and board games. Children can choose to spend time with others or to relax in their rooms. Staff take photos and create scrapbooks to remind children of their time at the school.

Children nominate representatives for the school council. The council is a strong voice in school, and children make suggestions for improvements. Many of the ideas they suggest get implemented, such as a salad bar in the dining room and a bike track outside.

School and care staff work closely together to ensure there is a seamless transition in the morning and evening for children. Care staff know what the children's school day has been like, and so they can tailor the evening to best support them. Staff understand how they can support and develop children's skills. There is a particular focus on understanding and improving independence skills.

Staff use walkie-talkie devices for communication due to the layout of the accommodation and the children's needs for support. This ensures that the right support is in place when needed. Leaders continue to review their use and explore less intrusive alternatives. Some staff allow themselves to be interrupted while spending time with children to respond to radio calls. As such, they are not always aware of the potential impact of these calls on the children.

Children say the school is a welcoming and inclusive place. Some children have been exposed to discriminatory language. One child spoke about how this has negatively affected them. Staff know about these concerns. They speak with children to educate them about the impact of the words used. Leaders recognise that this is an ongoing area of development.

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

Staff are confident to identify safeguarding concerns. Leaders take proportionate action in response to issues seen. For some concerns, this might be whole-school

education about the issue. The school programme for personal and social development is responsive to the themes and trends seen among students. Discussions that start in the school day continue through to the evenings. For more serious concerns, referrals are appropriately made to safeguarding authorities. Leaders share concerns with professionals already working with families, to build a shared understanding of risk as well as areas for support. Staff who are responsible for safeguarding review and monitor concerns for patterns and trends. Leaders have a good understanding of the areas of potential risk to children and are mindful of safeguarding concerns. They understand the patterns and trends and take action in response to issues seen.

Leaders foster an environment of appropriate support and challenge. When staff see practice concerns, they share them and investigations take place. When necessary, referrals are made to the local authority designated officer.

Staff use their understanding of children's backgrounds and experiences to inform their responses when children are upset or worried. Staff are skilled at de-escalation and effectively use this and distraction before resorting to restraint. Staff understand their role in supporting children to develop self-awareness. Restraint is used when necessary to prevent serious harm. There are effective systems in place to record and monitor this, with thorough oversight and scrutiny. Leaders explore patterns and trends in behaviour to allow effective learning from incidents. Restraint use has consistently reduced over the last four academic years.

Safer recruitment practices are followed. The single central register is maintained.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders demonstrate an unrelenting focus on improving the lives of the children they work with. There is an emphasis on using their understanding of children's experiences to help provide the best support possible. The head leads from the front, with excellent oversight of the residential provision. Residential care is central to the ethos of the school, and the very real benefit it has for children's routines and consistent experiences is valued. The head of welfare and deputy heads of care work closely to deliver positive and enriching experiences for children. There are clear systems in place to track important documents or events such as care plans, key working, staff supervision and phone calls home. This attention to detail means there is absolute confidence that the right support is in place.

Staff say leaders empower them to think innovatively and creatively. They describe a 'can-do' culture, where new options for interesting and fun activities are embraced. There is an emphasis on staff development and encouraging staff to think for themselves. When new opportunities are identified, training or resources are secured to provide this. Staff feel well supported. There are frequent opportunities for open discussion and learning. Leaders strengthen the mental well-being of staff through opportunities for conversations after incidents or time with therapy staff. They

recognise that staff in a positive frame of mind can provide their best to children. Staff retention is high, providing excellent consistency and stability for children.

Leaders have sustained and embedded a culture of nurture, support and understanding. Children's plans clearly reflect their earlier experiences at home and education. Staff know and understand key events in children's lives and how these might impact on them now. This tolerance and perception feature in the oversight and monitoring that is undertaken. Leaders have an in-depth understanding of events that lead to incidents, and they properly understand staff responses. This, combined with the clear culture and ethos, leads to meaningful change, such as a reduction in incidents of restraint.

The school communicates well with parents. Parents feel that school staff understand their children's needs and provide them with good-quality care. One parent describes staff as being 'in tune' with their child. They provide examples about how their children have made progress. They find that their children are more able to calm themselves when they are upset and can better cope with family life when they are at home. One parent describes the provision as 'life-changing' for their child and the whole family.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that they continue to consider ways to make the use of walkie-talkies less intrusive on children's time with staff.
- School leaders should ensure that they continue to address the use of discriminatory language by children.

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: SC039112

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Michelle Reysenn

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Clare Nixson, Social Care Inspector

Janet Jauregui, Social Care Inspector

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