

Saxon Hill

Saxon Hill Academy, Kings Hill Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9DE

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Saxon Hill is an academy school for children with a wide range of physical, complex medical, sensory, communication and/or learning difficulties. The school has a 14-bed residential provision called the Sleepover Club that offers overnight care to children who attend the school and are aged between five and 18 years.

There is a dedicated team of care staff that operates independently of, but in close liaison with, the teaching staff and other members of staff. The sleeping accommodation comprises six twin bedrooms and two single rooms. There are currently 132 children on roll at the school, of whom 42 currently access the residential provision.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 11 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive in a loving, caring and supportive environment. Staff are passionate about providing excellent care for children and enjoy the time they spend with children. Despite many children only staying for one or two nights a week, they all make considerable progress in areas such as their education, gaining social skills and accessing activities they may not otherwise be able to enjoy.

Children's progress is supported by detailed and highly individualised care plans, which staff implement. The plans provide support strategies specific to each child's needs, some of which are highly complex. This includes guidance on specific therapies, personal care needs, feeding regimes, mobility and communication systems.

Nurses train staff in the administration of medication and in nursing procedures, so that children's medical and health needs, some of which are complex, are met. Risk assessments for eating and drinking, and health plans, convey complex information in a clear way so that staff have unambiguous guidance to follow. This contributes significantly to children's safety.

Staff know the children very well and are nurturing and responsive to their needs. Through consistent and positive interactions, children develop warm, trusting relationships with staff. They also make friends with their peers and enjoy each other's company. Children flourish in an environment where they are valued as unique individuals and where staff appreciate them and act in response to their views.

Children participate in a range of evening activities, with the aim of providing opportunities for them to relax and enjoy their leisure time while at the same time promoting their independence and social skills. They use the excellent facilities that the school offers, and staff promote children's individual interests, ensuring that they participate in activities of their own choice in addition to group activities. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed an arts and craft activity that included making and decorating plant pots with a range of colourful and tactile items. Children were very proud of their achievements. This enhances children's self-esteem and brings out their creativity.

Children use a wide range of communication methods, including verbal, body language, Picture Exchange Communication System, tablets to type words, and eye movements, to ensure that their views are understood. Highly skilled and perceptive staff quickly learn the communication methods for each child and work hard to fully understand children's views, wishes and feelings. Consequently, children's self-confidence and self-esteem are promoted.

The physical standards of the residential provision are high and reflect the importance that staff place on providing a safe, comfortable environment for children to stay in. There is ample space for activities such as cooking and a spacious lounge area that provides opportunities for the children to play board games, listen to music, watch television or play on a games console. Staff make sure that children's complex needs do not limit their opportunities.

The cook in the residential provision maintains a record of each child's special dietary needs and has effective procedures in place to make sure that these are met.

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

Highly trained staff safeguard children who have complex developmental, medical and behavioural needs. The school's headteacher, head of care and senior staff make up the safeguarding team in the school. They are the designated safeguarding advisers and are appropriately trained and experienced. As a team, they meet regularly to review all reported safeguarding concerns and to monitor what action has been taken to protect identified children from coming to harm. Detailed records of child protection referrals, including a chronological audit trail of action taken and decisions made, clearly demonstrate a rigorous approach to keeping children safe.

The staff have a clear understanding of the increased risks children face and how disability can make them particularly vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and abuse. Areas such as internet and social media risks are addressed, and children are supervised to ensure that they remain safe. Risk assessments and plans are clear on how children are supported, and care plans are implemented meticulously in staff practice. This gives children the opportunity to feel safe, which then provides a basis for them to grow and develop.

Staff know children well and provide close support and supervision to reduce risks and promote well-being without being intrusive or unnecessarily protective. Staff understand the importance of letting children experience challenges to achieve their potential in solving problems. They want children to experience exciting and new situations safely. The staff are not complacent and use skilfully judged interventions to maintain children's safety and well-being.

Children are able to reflect on behaviours and implement new strategies because staff have helped them to feel safe, secure and cared for. Children have been able to reflect on their past experiences and then implement positive coping mechanisms. Skilful staff intervention has created strong and meaningful relationships. This has enabled children to confide in staff about past events and current worries.

The layout and maintenance of the building ensure that children are safe while being given the freedom to move about to choose their activities and who they want to be with. The garden is arranged so that children can sit on the grass and play in the sandpit or in the playhouse, and staff can always see and monitor them. The open-

plan dining and living room has space to safely move wheelchairs and for staff to stand or sit with children without causing an obstruction. Based on ongoing risk assessments for each child, the external doors are kept locked to ensure that no unauthorised person can enter the building. However, children and adults are not locked in. Rigorous health and safety checks by the maintenance team demonstrate their commitment to ensuring a safe physical environment for children. Children have personal evacuation plans to guide staff in assisting them to leave the building in the event of an emergency.

Safer recruitment processes are followed effectively. Thorough records detail all necessary information on new and existing staff. This ensures that children are cared for by adults who have been appropriately vetted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers have successfully embedded a culture in the residential provision where pupils thrive. All staff share a strong ethos of constantly striving to provide individualised support to prepare children for their futures.

A strong governing body provides effective scrutiny, challenge and oversight of the residential provision. A particularly knowledgeable and experienced governor regularly visits the residential provision, providing leaders and managers with detailed and comprehensive reports with action points, which help to ensure that high standards of care are maintained and there is continuous improvement.

Monitoring of the residential provision is a continuous process on all levels, to drive improvement and ensure that children benefit from high standards of care and opportunities to develop. Regular monitoring visits by an independent visitor result in recommendations for improvement when necessary. Quality assurance visits from peer reviewers and the local authority create opportunities for further learning and development through the actions identified and demonstrate sustained improvement over a period of time.

The highly skilled staff work cohesively, supporting each other to meet the children's individual needs. Managers encourage the staff to be creative and innovative and through this to continuously improve the children's experience of living at the school. One example of this is the recently updated inclusive gaming area that staff have designed, which meets all children's needs.

Staff receive regular supervision and effective support from managers to improve their practice and their support for children, with a sharp focus on safeguarding and promoting their well-being.

Intensive research leads to new initiatives and improvements. The senior leaders explore resources with care and consideration. For example, the school has introduced 'The Zones of Regulation', adopting the programme across the whole school to coordinate all well-being support and ensure that there is consistency

throughout the child's school journey. The aim of this is to support children to understand their own emotions and learn to be as independent as possible in their regulation.

Training and development of staff are a high priority, to ensure that all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to support children effectively and promote positive outcomes. Staff have opportunities to ensure that they keep up to date with good practice developments and undertake training to extend their competence to meet the complex needs of children. All staff are required to achieve the level 3 diploma in residential childcare. The induction, personal development programme and supervision systems ensure that staff understand their roles, have clear objectives and receive training to support children's progress and achievement.

Working with parents and carers is a strength of the school. Staff work collaboratively with families, know them well and keep them informed of their children's progress, so that children benefit from a consistent approach and their needs are identified and met. Parents report positively on the effective relationships with staff. One parent reported, 'The Sleepover Club provides an excellent extension of the school day. My son has targets to work on as well as learning essential life skills such as cooking and stripping his bed. He loves attending and is the only place that he will go without his dad or myself.' Staff resolve any concerns or queries promptly. Consequently, there have been no complaints since the last inspection.

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: SC038728

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Melanie Newbury

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Carl Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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