

Hailey Hall School

Hailey Lane, Hertford SG13 7PB

Inspection dates	27/09/2016 to 29/09/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Good	2
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

- All children flourish as a direct result of the experiences that they have at school. Each individual makes significant progress across all aspects of their development.
- All children speak highly of the care and support that they receive from the residential and teaching staff.
- All children's confidence, self-esteem and ability to interact with peers improve significantly.
- Parents speak highly of the staff and the care that they provide for their children. They experience the benefits of the support that their child receives.
- A clear and well-used reporting policy, alongside continuous staff training, supports a robust and effective day-to-day approach to safeguarding.
- Continuity in the staff team sets the scene for encouraging children to develop meaningful and supportive appropriate relationships with adults.
- A unified and harmonious approach between school and residential staff results in an active and vibrant service.
- Leaders and managers role model the whole-school approach to child-centred practice.
- Leaders and managers continually seek to improve the provision and outcomes for the children.
- There are no shortfalls in relation to the national minimum standards.

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?

- Consider evidencing more clearly the steps taken to engage parents and carers in the identification of support plan targets, and send parents and carers a copy of the support plans.
- Consider committing to paper, for each child, specific information about night-time requirements and the potential impact of any requirements identified.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the three boarding houses took place within three hours of the announcement. The inspection methodology included time with residential pupils; an evaluation of Parent View and online surveys; a study of residential care routines and practice; an analysis of policies and records; and conversations with parents by telephone. Discussions took place with a range of staff responsible for managing, coordinating and delivering residential care, such as residential staff, teaching staff, support staff, the head of care, the headteacher, the school governor with responsibility for residential provision and the chair of governors. Discussion also took place with the local authority designated officer and the independent listener.

Inspection team

Rosie Davie

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Hailey Hall School is a residential and day special school for boys aged 11 to 16 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). The school is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of Hoddesdon. The school is an academy. All children who attend have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. A very small number are looked after by the local authority. Some children receive extended day opportunities.

The residential facilities accommodates up to a maximum of 20 boarders. At the time of this inspection, 12 children were staying between one and four nights a week. They board between Monday and Friday, term time only. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Children flourish as a result of their experience at the school. Progress for all is notable. For example, 100% of those who board make significant improvements in English and maths. This is across all year groups. Furthermore, developments in an individual's ability to interact socially are remarkable. All parents represented in this inspection spoke of the advancement that they see in their child since they have begun to board. For example, one parent said, 'Boarding has improved my son's independence and social interaction enormously.' Another parent said: 'The change in my son has been fundamental. We can do things as a family that we could not have done before.'

The careful management of the admission process ensures that individual needs of children are anticipated, and are sensitively identified and catered for. Support staff spend time with children and their families to ensure that plans are bespoke. This means that there is much attention to detail in getting to know and understand the needs of each child before boarding begins. A representative from the teaching staff said, 'We see that boarding has a hugely positive effect.'

The structure and arrangements for boarding follow a routine. The children understand and rely upon the flow of the evening and morning schedules. The result is that they benefit from and respond very well to the set-up as a whole. All children represented in this inspection said that they like to board very much. The children can be on their own or spend time in one another's company. They enjoy a broad range of invigorating fun experiences, including occasional overnights away, Quasar, cinema trips, playing table tennis and pool. At least twice each day, the children are involved in planning ahead, having a say in how they would like to spend their time and the format of the activities that they would like to take part in. Children receive encouragement to take age-appropriate risks and to try new things. All of this helps to build confidence and resilience, and helps children to feel valued as individuals.

Children receive support to make and maintain respectful and trusting relationships with one other. For example, the peer mentoring system encourages children of different ages and abilities to mix, enabling them to share tips and advice about boarding. The result is that children say that there are no incidents of bullying. They consistently say that they are well supported and enjoy the opportunity to make and develop friendships, as a result of boarding. One parent said: 'For my son, at home friendships are difficult. Because of boarding, he has been given a social life and the opportunity to make friends. This has helped him to develop socially in ways that we could not have imagined.'

Children routinely and consistently have their views and opinions sought about how boarding could be improved. One child said: 'They are always asking us what we think. Every day.' They are creatively and actively involved in identifying the techniques and approaches for staff to use to manage any problematic behaviour. The result is that children say that the staff are fair and take an inclusive approach.

The managers who oversee service delivery are 'hands on'. This means that they make it

their collective business to get to know the children as individuals. This helps managers to pinpoint expediently and then improve on any perceived areas of weakness. The managers are extremely proficient in their ability to engage and communicate with the children which means that, alongside the residential staff, they also share excellent relationships with them. This means that there is a whole-school approach to preparing these children for life beyond Year 11.

Robust day-to-day arrangements are at the heart of the effectively written policies and procedures. Systems are tried, tested and developed. They demonstrate that the safety of all children is paramount. Staff at all levels are fully aware of their responsibilities to report any cause for concern, which means that any issue is identified, tracked and acted upon. This, combined with frequent communication with children and their parents, means that both staff and the children live the ethos of the school. The result is that the residential provision continues to meet, and frequently to exceed, the national minimum standards.

The quality of care and support

Good

Located in the same building as the classrooms, the boarding accommodation is in three distinct areas. Each has its own communal living room. There is a good opportunity for the older children to practice independent living skills and for each of the smaller groups to gather together in their respective areas as the night-time routine begins. The combination of these arrangements helps to make children to feel comfortable, relax and to embrace the concept of family living.

There is ample personal space for the children to personalise and to store belongings securely in the dormitories or in the few single bedrooms. One child said: 'They are always reminding us to bring in posters or pictures.' Children say that they like the opportunity to share the communal dormitory space and are pleased to see that leaders have listened to them towards taking steps to improve further the privacy arrangements, by ordering more curtains for the dormitories for those children who have requested them.

A number of the children board for more than one academic year and some return after taking a break from boarding. Arrangements are dynamic, and are tailored to reflect the unique and developing needs of each child. For example, for one child the headteacher employed a waking night member of staff to ensure that to his needs were attended to around the clock. Staff come to know each child's habits and rituals very well. However, for new children coming in, particularly those using the dormitories, an area for improvement identified from this inspection is to commit to paper specific information about night-time requirements and any potential impact of any requirements identified.

The residential staff work 'hand in glove' with the teaching and support staff to make certain that each child receives tailored care and support. For example, prior to admission, they work efficiently with all stakeholders to identify and anticipate the needs of each individual child. This helps the residential staff to set out unique targets to document in the personalised support plans. Staff help children to achieve their targets and involve them in the revision of their plan. They review arrangements with parents four weeks after boarding commences. This helps everyone to have a clear idea about progress, what is working well and what changes may be necessary. Parents are

unanimously complimentary about the work that staff do. However, an area to strengthen practice is to engage parents and carers in the identification of support plan targets, and to send each parent or carer a copy of their child's support plan.

Children behave in ways that show that staff use unconditional positive regard when they are with them. The children are proud to be part of the boarding community. Each child experiences care that is responsive to and considerate of their own identity, ethnicity and communications skills. One parent said: 'Staff have been very good at ensuring that my son's personal care is good. I do not need to worry about his skin or teeth.' Weekly discussion groups focus on topics chosen by the children to help them to explore their views and opinions about different issues impacting on their world, for example from terrorism to the impact of misusing drug and alcohol. They receive care and help which enable them to grow and develop their self-esteem, resulting in a confident sense of their own uniqueness.

Children are encouraged and helped to be in regular contact with their parents by phone or from visits to the school. Parents unanimously say that communication is of a high standard. One said: 'I had been nervous at first about the idea of boarding, but I need not have been. The staff are excellent. They will call to speak to me about any little thing. They have come to know my son very well.'

The school sits in extensive, well-maintained grounds. This provides an additional opportunity to support the school curriculum by promoting good health and fitness. For example, physical education teachers spend time with the children in the evening encouraging them to run around the gardens, or to play football and basketball. The emphasis on physical activity also helps to promote healthy minds and positive psychological health.

The arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are robust and well defined. Managers routinely oversee systems and, as a result, staff are confident about policies and procedures. In the event of new medical or personal care situations arising, managers are proactive to ensure that staff have the appropriate training.

A new and enhanced kitchen facility has resulted in a broader range of food being available for everyone. For evening meals and breakfast, there is a selection of good quality and nutritious meals. The chef says that he encourages the children to tell him what they like, to help him to adjust the menus. Children sit with the residential and teaching staff, sharing mealtimes, thus providing a routine opportunity for reflecting on the events of the day and sharing stories. This practice strengthens relationships and places value on communication, connections and customs that form the foundation of family values.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

One parent, echoing the views of all spoken to, said: 'My son is very happy there and always tells me that he feels safe and well.'

Children confidently say that they feel safe. They are aware that their welfare and protection are paramount to the staff working across all levels at the school. One child said: 'They are all always concerned about what is happening or if something might have

happened to any of us.' This means that there is an attentive approach to child protection and safeguarding which the children are conscious of.

The residential staff work shoulder to shoulder with their colleagues across the school, and, when necessary, stakeholders, to ensure that the information that is picked up during the school day or from home to school transitions that could be a concern is contextualised. One member of staff said: 'It doesn't matter how small the issue may appear, it is important that we have a record of it because there may be other information at another time that could mean that there is something to be worried about.' The result is a vigorous, forensic approach to protecting and safeguarding children. The designated staff for safeguarding work tirelessly to respond to and address any issues that may hint at alarm. Written risk assessments evidence that consideration is given to 'what if?' scenarios. The deputy headteacher says: 'We are a small school and this means that we know each of our children very well. We know if there is an issue and we are quick to act and involve other agencies, if necessary.'

There have been no referrals made to the resident authority designated officer. Clear, unambiguous policies and procedures ensure that all staff understand the expectation to report any worries without delay. This whole-school approach ensures that the children using the residential service benefit from this transparent culture. Posters and information are displayed in and around the school and boarding areas to identify whom children can approach should they have any concerns about their care, their peers or adults. Additionally, the independent listener comes into the school specifically to meet with the children who board to explain her role. This provides an external layer for protecting children from harm.

Children do not go missing. Staff have a thorough understanding of the action to take should a child leave the grounds of the school or become absent during an external activity. The combination of a peer mentoring approach and robust staffing levels reduces the likelihood of children wandering off intentionally or through upset. Photographs and unique information are readily available, should they ever be required, ready to ensure any child's swift return to the safety of the school environment.

Physical intervention has not been used for quite some time, since before the last inspection. Staff say that it has been 'years' since this approach has been required. This is because staff recognise that other strategies can be more effective. One member of staff said, 'I can say to any boy; go outside have a walk and come back.' Nonetheless, staff maintain the required skill level by attending training and completing refresher practice sessions. This demonstrates that, were it to be necessary, staff have the confidence to intervene to keep children safe from harm or causing harm to others.

Staff take an all-encompassing approach to managing behaviour. They are respectful and sensitive to the emotional impact of difficulties that emerge across a school day on an individual basis. They have written information to help them to identify and review strategies for offering support. There is an inclusive approach to sanctions. For example, an agreed tariff chosen and approved by the children is used to list the 'menu' of consequences and rewards. The result is many examples where children receive rewards and recognition for their achievement, and few incidents or sanctions.

Fire and health and safety checks are carried out thoroughly and routinely. Any issues

identified through checks are acted upon swiftly. Children are encouraged to increase their understanding of safety matters, such as fire. For example, creative role play encourages them to hold in mind what would be required of them in the event of an actual fire emergency.

Staff recruitment processes are vigorous. Additionally, measures for overseeing arrangements for adults living on site, yet who are not involved in teaching or providing care, are robust and reviewed regularly.

Leaders have well-developed and robust strategies designed to keep children safe. The stability within the leadership group provides reassurance for parents and teachers alike. There is a determination that there is no room for complacency in approach, which means that there is a continual thirst for new guidance and research into keeping children safe in education provisions.

The children, parents and staff represented in this inspection unanimously identified no cause for concern. On the contrary, one parent and one child independently said, 'The school is like a second family to us.' The culture is such that the values of acceptance and respect permeate through the school and the boarding provision. The chair of governors said: 'Boarding is a very important element of what we do at the school to give children the best possible start in life.'

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The head of care has held the role for many years. He is an integral member of the school's senior leadership team, which means that he plays an active role in the updating of policies and development plans. He works efficiently with the head and deputy headteachers, to excellent effect, to deliver the school's vision to inspire children to reach their full potential. The result is outstanding outcomes for children who feel valued and supported. One parent said, 'Boarding is like an extension of our family.'

The head of care is appropriately qualified with the level 5 diploma in management and leadership. Nonetheless, he continues to seek to increase his knowledge and understanding of social care by reading and putting into practice ideas from research, for example strategies for promoting positive emotional well-being. One consequence from this approach is that the team is knowledgeable and places value on improvement. Additionally, the aims and objectives set out on the statement of purpose are immediately evident in the combined approach and practice of the staff who work with daily oversight from their dedicated, knowledgeable leaders.

Throughout the school year, written feedback is sought on a regular basis from the children, their parents and other stakeholders. This enables the senior leaders to align their plans towards addressing any issues that may arise. Their collective proactive approach has a positive and reassuring impact. Many parents' feedback for this inspection reflected the information provided by one: 'We are routinely asked to give feedback about the boarding service and we can also call at any time. Communication is excellent.'

The residential staff are a small yet a highly skilled team. Over a number of years, they have built positive and meaningful relationships with individual children. During this

inspection, a child who had left the school returned to see the residential staff. He said to the inspector, without being asked: 'Boarding here is the best thing. The staff are excellent and so supportive. They made a big difference to my life.'

The residential staff receive an annual appraisal and regular supervision, which offer them the opportunity to reflect on their own learning and professional developmental needs. The training available is extensive and impressive. Many courses on offer mirror those available for the teaching and support staff, for example in relation to working with autism and mental health. This contributes to an overall continuity in approach between school and boarding. The result is that the team exceeds the expected level of social care training and qualifications. They work impressively to ensure that individual children receive high levels of support and supervision. More than one child said that the best thing about boarding is 'the support'.

Where additional staffing may be required on shift, for example due to numbers or specific needs of children, this is sourced without delay. Additionally, colleagues from school do not hesitate to offer their time. This level of commitment from the wider group of staff results in an impressive strengthening of the continuity of care for the children. The headteacher said, 'Whatever it takes for the children to have the best experiences, we do it.'

There have been no complaints about the residential provision. One child said: 'We do not need to complain about anything, because they are so open about everything and always talking to us. The headteacher always tells us, 'Boys, this is your school.'

Internal monitoring of the effectiveness of the systems and the impact of the work with children is daily and continuous. The headteacher said, 'I only want people to work here if they can really show their commitment to the children.' Minimum termly visits from a governor provide scrutiny about the ongoing quality and impact of the residential service. Findings from each visit are recorded and shared with the board of governors. This effective level of monitoring offers appropriate challenge for the senior leadership team, helping to avoid complacency and offering another layer towards the overall safeguarding of children.

All of the senior leaders and highly visible in the school, including at the times that the children are boarding. For example, the deputy head frequently shares an evening meal and sleeps overnight with the children. This level of involvement in service delivery helps her to see and experience the strengths of the service and to intervene, in partnership with the residential staff, to anticipate weakness, resulting in positive preventative action. The result is a provision which continues to offer life-changing and outstanding opportunities for children.

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

Unique reference number	142257
Social care unique reference number	SC056397
DfE registration number	919/7014P

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.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	15
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Heather Boardman
Date of previous boarding inspection	18/02/2016
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