

Saxon Hill

Saxon Hill Special School, 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 residential accommodation, called the 'sleepover club', that offers overnight care for up to 14 children who attend the school per night, 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 133 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: 12 to 14 November 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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 previous inspection: 11 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children have made extraordinary progress due to tailored care from staff. Care plans are detailed and consider the complex needs of the children. Before a child comes to stay, discussions take place between staff, the child's family or guardians and any health professionals involved. There is effective planning around health and personal care needs, communication and feeding schedules. This contributes to children developing skills with their independence and feeding and dressing themselves and making progress in education and socialising with other children.

Children flourish in a nurturing and supportive environment. Leaders and staff create a home away from home. The sensory room has been further enhanced with more sensory equipment, including projectors, toys and fibre optic lighting. Staff foster a sense of belonging for children in residence.

Staff have an exemplary knowledge of children's individual needs and their potential capability. There is a golden thread programme that is developed between the school and the residence to help children develop in areas of communication, independence, engagement and learning, well-being and community participation. Children are kept at the heart of their journey to ensure that each action set is suitable for them. This has maximised positive outcomes for children.

Leaders and staff are attentive in their role as carers. Because of this, children feel safe, and they also enjoy close and secure relationships with each other. Children told the inspectors that they love seeing friends and doing activities in the residence. Staff arranged a sensory firework display for children that was more suitable to their needs. This allowed children to access an activity that would not ordinarily be accessible.

Children are encouraged to develop interests and skills that enhance the quality of their day-to-day lives. Children have access to an online children's university that allows them to collect stamps and points for completing extracurricular activities and learning experiences. Children have engaged in a learning session regarding Florence Nightingale, which provided them with basic first-aid skills.

Staff are guided by a team of highly qualified health professionals, including school nurses, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. The administration and recording of medication are consistently safe. The practice has been developed since the last inspection. Staff have attended medication awareness sessions and have been trained in specific areas, including buccal and anaphylaxis. The practice for medication storage has been strengthened with the introduction of images of children, which reduces the risk of error.

The school cook is a longstanding member of the team. She has an impressive knowledge of each child's dietary needs, likes and dislikes. The cooking and dining space is safe, well maintained and clean, which helps children's experience of mealtimes to be a positive one.

Children's preferred methods of communication are known, and staff take great care to ensure that children can influence their day-to-day care. Staff are trained and use communication aids, including PODD Communication Systems and electronic devices that make use of head and eye movement. There are excellent systems in place to ensure children can raise concerns easily. The systems include the use of a QR code. For children who cannot use the system, they can remove the QR code sign from the wall to indicate to staff that they have concerns. This system is unique and ensures that children feel empowered and free to share concerns as they wish.

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

Leaders and staff receive extensive training on how to safeguard children who have a range of complex needs, both medically and behaviourally. Staff use an online system to report any safeguarding concerns that they have. Staff are confident in reporting anything that may potentially impact on children's welfare. All potential safeguarding concerns are taken seriously by senior leaders with regular team meetings to discuss all safeguarding concerns, and actions from these meetings have been robust. These are consistently recorded and tracked to ensure that a clear chronology is kept of actions. Leaders liaise well with all individuals involved with the child to ensure that the correct support is provided. Children feel safe due to this multi-agency approach and are provided with the opportunity to thrive.

Staff have an excellent level of vigilance over children who access the residence, and they understand the importance of positive risk-taking to enhance the development of independence. Children are provided with the opportunity to safely take on new challenges, such as feeding themselves, cutting up their own food and taking ownership of personal care where appropriate. This has been a key factor that has contributed to the continuous development of children.

Staff have a strong understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities. Children are provided with information on how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Risk management plans are highly detailed and written with the child at the heart of the document. They are regularly reviewed, ensuring that staff are supporting children by using the most current information. This contributes to the exceptional care children receive from the care staff.

Staff have an outstanding knowledge of behaviour management. They use a range of options to avoid crisis and use strategies for crisis intervention that are informed by the provider's prevention model. Care staff work in collaboration with school staff to review the effectiveness of any actions implemented for children. As a result of staff using this model, there has been an exceptionally low number of concerns in the

residence. Children are supported to demonstrate positive behaviours with peers and the use of the buddy system. This promotes positive relationships among children, preventing incidents of bullying. Staff also recognise the importance of children having consistent routines and boundaries to reduce any potential anxieties.

Staff recruitment is conducted safely. Clear records are in place for all new and existing staff members. The head of care and the headteacher oversee recruitment once information has been submitted.

Robust health and safety checks are carried out in the residence by the maintenance team. Children are provided with personalised fire evacuation plans to guide staff on how to assist children in the event of an emergency. Leaders have developed a colour-coded system that is displayed on bedroom doors during each child's stay. This highlights the level of ability that each child has to leave the property independently. This enables staff to see which children require full assistance and which children can independently leave with less support. External doors are kept locked to ensure that no unauthorised individuals access the residence. This provides a safe and secure atmosphere.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are remarkably passionate about the high-quality service provided to children. Leaders have created a culture where staff support children to continue to flourish and make life-lasting progress. This has spread to the staff, who are consistently striving to provide the best care and support to prepare children for adulthood.

Leaders have implemented innovative research practices to help provide life-changing outcomes for children. Leaders have explored research around postural care for children. The purpose of the research is to protect the body shape of children who have conditions that impact them physically. Leaders have allocated representatives from the school and the residential staff group to undertake extensive training with the external organisation. This research has been shared with the families of children, health professionals and the staff team to assess the best level of support available for each child.

Staff receive a wide range of unique training experiences. They have a rigorous induction when starting in their roles and also have personal development opportunities to enhance their skills. Staff are expected to complete the level 3 diploma in residential childcare. Leaders and staff regularly review new opportunities to gain experience in bespoke areas for children. This has included training in CHARGE syndrome, ventilation and visual impairment. Training is a high priority in the setting to ensure that all staff have the essential skills and knowledge and can maintain exceptional standards.

Monitoring in the residence includes effective scrutiny and strong oversight. The needs of all children are at the centre of the systems in place. The service benefits

from regular independent visits, where actions are set to drive improvement. The governing body also supports by providing regular visits to the setting. The governing body and independent visitors regularly consult with leaders of the residence and work in union. Internal monitoring systems are very robust and include internal service audits, residential placement reviews and quarterly contract reviews.

Staff benefit from high-quality supervision with leaders. Supervision sessions are effective, and staff feel supported by the head of care and other senior staff. Supervision allows staff to reflect on their practice and focus on children's needs, experiences, progress and safeguarding.

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: Maggie Candlish

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Chanel Bryant, Social Care Inspector

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