

# 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. The school is for children who have a wide range of physical, complex medical, sensory, communication and /or learning difficulties. The school has a 14-bed unit called The Sleepover Club that offers individually based 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 123 children on roll at the school, of whom 42 currently access the residential provision.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 16 to 18 November 2021

**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:** 24 September 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Staff provide high-quality individualised care that enables children to make significant progress from their initial starting points. The residential provision provides children with an extremely positive learning environment that promotes their growth and development. Staff support families who need additional support. For example, during the COVID-19-related lockdowns, staff from the provision delivered food parcels to families to help support them through the pandemic.

The staff team knows the children extremely well, and the staff clearly enjoy being with the children. They provide the children with consistent care. Children have formed strong, trusting relationships with the staff. Children spend quality time with the staff from the point that they finish school and transition into the residential provision. There is a great deal of laughter and a genuine warmth between the children and staff. A parent said: 'The staff are lovely, friendly, helpful and I trust them with my child, who loves Sleepover Club, as they teach her life skills and [it] has given her a confidence boost and [means that she is] able to spend time with her friends.'

Inductions for children into the provision are carefully planned. Information is sought from a range of sources, including parents, schools and health professionals. This allows for understanding the life and needs of the child and supports detailed care planning. Children settle quickly because they are supported with good information and reassurances from staff. Children and their families can visit the service, have after-school visits and a gradual build-up until they feel comfortable.

The residential provision is a fully integrated and valued part of the school. The monitoring and evidencing of children's success are highly effective. Detailed records show how each child has thrived both academically and with their social and life skills. Each child receives tailored support aimed at their level of confidence and understanding. Staff encourage and enable children to develop their independence and they give extra support to those who need it. One parent told the inspector, with regard to her child: 'She has gained more confidence, can speak to adults better, [and has] confidence to be away from home.'

There are comprehensive health plans for each child. This means that residential staff have access to detailed health information. Staff understand each child's health needs, including their emotional health needs, extremely well. Their skill in meeting the wide range of health needs is impressive. Staff have received training in a range of medical interventions. Medication is stored securely, and clear records are maintained of all medication dispensed. Managers conduct regular audits of medication to ensure that practice remains safe.

The cook carefully tailors the meals to meet the individual needs of each child and ensures that there is always an option that the children will like. A range of feeding systems are used, with staff being well trained in each area, promoting children's privacy when necessary. Specialist equipment and staff's constant awareness of the children's abilities help children to learn new skills at mealtimes and develops their independence.

Staff have a clear focus on enabling and supporting an approach to communication that does not disadvantage or exclude anyone from making safe daily life choices. Children have control over their lives that is consistent with their abilities and levels of independence. Staff are diligent in ensuring that children are treated fairly, respectfully and with due regard for their individual needs. Staff are committed to helping children overcome barriers and challenges, particularly those that relate to learning and physical disabilities.

Children are encouraged and supported to take part in a range of activities. Physical adaptations, communication processes and clear risk management ensure that all children can take part. Children are safe and their independence is promoted because the physical environment is appropriately designed and adapted according to their needs.

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

A strength of the service is how staff understand the complexities of children's disabilities, behaviours and communication processes. This insight informs effective organisation and operation of the residential provision. High levels of supervision and vigilance promote the safety and welfare of children.

Risk assessment and management are excellently managed. Concerns and challenges are clearly identified. Strategies to manage these concerns focus on safety but also ensure that all children have opportunities to reach their potential and achieve.

Staff are familiar with the school's safeguarding procedures and how to report a concern if needed. This is because they receive safeguarding training that is regularly refreshed. The school is proactive and has ensured that senior staff who are designated officers within the school are trained to the appropriate level for the role. Furthermore, designated school-wide safeguarding meetings are now held weekly to improve communication and information-sharing.

Governors with a responsibility for safeguarding have received a range of training in child protection and safeguarding. They have a secure understanding of their role and are not afraid to challenge the head of care or the senior management team on any safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding remains a key element for all governors.

The recruitment, selection and vetting of staff are effective. The head of care is fully involved in the recruitment process to make sure that staff have the right

competencies and skills to meet the needs of the children using the residential provision.

Children are protected from hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and routine maintenance checks to ensure that the premises are safe. Regular fire drills ensure that all children and staff know what to expect if the alarm is raised and how to evacuate the school in the event of an emergency.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The head of care is committed to providing high standards of individualised care for children. Senior leaders are passionate about the residential provision and the role that it plays in enhancing and improving the lives of children. They have created a dynamic and inspirational environment where children and staff can grow and gain a range of new skills. Subsequently, children receive the highest quality of care and support and enjoy a seamless journey through school and residence.

Staff say that they are well managed, that they feel valued and believe that managers have the best interests of the children at heart. The staff demonstrate delight in children's achievements. They have used research-based practice to continue to develop the residential provision. For example, the staff are using a new inclusive evidence tool to support them to gauge outcomes of children using the provision. All staff recognise this as a fundamental tool for securing ongoing improvements.

The skilled and experienced staff team receives high-quality training and regular reflective supervision. Staff are consistent and supportive of one another. This results in good team morale and ensures that they clearly understand the responsibilities of their roles.

Excellent systems for monitoring the residential provision, both internally and externally, are in place, including self-evaluation, independent visitors, quality assurance visits from the local authority, peer reviews and consultation with stakeholders. Reports are shared with the governing body. This enables governors to have a clear oversight of the impact that the provision has had on the outcomes for children.

Staff and leaders work effectively in partnership with an extensive range of other professionals in areas such as health and safeguarding. Excellent links with other schools, sharing ideas and best practice, enable learning and development. There is good collaboration between managers, staff and parents, who speak highly of the quality of care provided and the difference that this makes to them and their children's lives. One parent said: 'My child has acquired many skills, such as getting dressed, making the bed and many necessary things for everyday functioning. Saxon Hill Academy school is a wonderful school that I could recommend to any parent.'

## **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:** Mrs Melsa Buxton

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Alison Cooper, Social Care Inspector

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