

# Shenstone Lodge School

Shenstone Lodge School, Birmingham Road, Shenstone Wood End, Lichfield,  
Staffordshire WS14 0LB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Shenstone Lodge School is a split-site, maintained residential special school catering for children who experience severe emotional and/or mental health difficulties. Across the sites there are 79 pupils on roll. The residential provision is situated on the Shenstone Lodge site, which offers education for pupils aged 6 to 13. Currently, there are 47 pupils on the site, of which 8 are residential pupils. The accommodation houses up to 10 children each night Monday to Thursday.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 14 February 2019

**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:** 12 March 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children thoroughly enjoy their residential stays.
- Children form exceptionally warm and trusting relationships with staff.
- The residential provision contributes significantly to the progress that children make in school.
- Children grow in self-confidence, social skills, communication and ability to manage their emotions and behaviour.
- Dedicated and highly skilled staff treat each child with dignity and respect.
- Staff sensitively listen to children and make them feel that their views, wishes, and feelings are highly valued.
- Highly trained and vigilant staff ensure that children are safe.
- Management of the provision is excellent.
- Leadership is inspirational, creative and child focused.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for residential special schools:

- Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care). (NMS 3.6)  
In particular, include the provision of a bound book for recording controlled drugs.

## Inspection judgements

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

Children enjoy coming for residential stays and have great fun together and with the staff. Children form exceptionally warm and trusting relationships with caring staff, seeking them out for hugs and chats. They benefit hugely from the attention that staff pay to their individual communication needs, enabling children to express their views, wishes and feelings in their own way. Sensitive and highly skilled staff enabled one child, who was struggling to express her emotions, to communicate that she was unhappy with a spare bed in her bedroom. Staff immediately removed the spare bed. The child was then not only able to enjoy her bedroom, but to realise the power of her own voice.

Perceptive staff communicate with and listen to children, seeking feedback from them constantly. Children engage in children's meetings when they discuss activities, menus and ideas. Colourful written and pictorial information on the walls tells children about activities, routines, the independent person and how to make a complaint. Children who have highly complex needs who attend the residential provision become increasingly confident in expressing themselves. When children ask to telephone their family members, staff immediately facilitate a call.

Children enjoy a welcoming, homely environment and personalise their bedrooms with pictures, posters and toys. Children love the food and like the catering staff who ensure that their dietary needs are met. Children 'let off steam' by playing in the grounds and going for trips out with staff. Staff are strongly focused on enabling children to feel cared for and to have their individual needs recognised and met.

Children benefit from an excellent system of reward points called 'dojos' and are excited to have opportunities to gain more points. Each child has a list of three targets at any one time, such as getting more exercise, making friendships and listening. On a trip to the local park, children who had struggled to communicate and socialise prior to accessing the residential provision were observed to run and climb, talk to other children at the park and to listen to staff when it was time to go. Each child makes progress towards their targets. Children are encouraged to build relationships outside the residential provision, for example by attending cubs. Activities are tailored to each child's needs and targets and support their physical as well as mental health.

Children make significant progress in learning to understand and manage their emotions and behaviour. They understand and engage in a 'parking' system, based on a behaviour recovery model. This innovative system allows children to leave stressful situations and go to pre-agreed spaces to calm themselves down. When children return calm, staff praise them and talk to them about how well they have responded. As a result, children make progress in self-regulation which allows them to be in control of their own emotions.

Children make significant progress in developing social, communication and independence skills. They engage positively in regular informal 'My learning' sessions which staff facilitate after the evening meal. Children watch videos and a staff presentation and join in discussions about a wide range of issues including aspects of diversity. This helps them to broaden their knowledge, speak confidently and express their opinions.

When children access the residential provision, these benefits help them to make remarkable progress in their educational achievement and attainment. Most children are functioning below age-related expectations, but 100% of residential pupils are making expected or above expected progress in English and Mathematics. All children in residential are more likely to make good or outstanding progress relative to their peers who do not attend the provision.

When children come into or leave the residential provision, staff carefully plan and manage the move to inform and reassure children and their families. Children have opportunities to get to know and trust residential staff who help in the school. When children move to another provision, residential staff accompany them on introductions, helping children to adjust and settle.

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

Highly trained, vigilant staff prioritise safeguarding and keep children safe. Appropriate staffing levels, consistent staffing and exceptional behaviour management contribute to a calm and orderly environment. Children feel safe and secure, and parents and professionals are confident that they are safe.

Children become increasingly safe in the residential provision. No child has gone missing from the residential provision and there have been no allegations or serious incidents since the last full inspection. No children have been subject to child sexual exploitation. Staff are fully trained in safeguarding and child protection practice, policies and procedures. All staff are first-aid trained. Some staff have also done emergency, defibrillation and emergency paediatric first aid. All staff have food hygiene qualifications and staff who carry out risk assessments, personal emergency evacuation plans, and environmental assessments are trained in this specific work. Staff are booked to attend anti-radicalisation training.

When incidents do occur, staff respond quickly in keeping with the school's policy. The deputy head of care undertakes de-briefs to discuss practice and identify if anything could have been done differently or improved. Physical intervention is only carried out by trained staff and only as a last resort.

Bullying is not tolerated. Staff educate children about bullying to help them recognise their own behaviour and the behaviour of other children towards them. Staff constantly emphasise to children that they need to be kind to each other. Key work is creative, and staff recognised that one child, who had been bullying other children, did so out of loneliness. Staff asked the child if he wanted to be a buddy to another

child to help them settle into the residential provision. He has benefitted enormously from this role and has learned about friendship.

Staff also address safety issues with children via carefully planned and targeted key work and 'my learning' sessions. Children know and understand what to do in the event of a fire because they take part in regular fire drills and practices. Children that do not have the capacity to understand the risk that they may face in the event of a fire evacuation have personal emergency evacuation plans in place. This ensures that they can be safely supported in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Strong relationships between staff and children ensure that staff know each child well and are skilled in recognising triggers to behaviour which could place them at risk. Staff are exceptional at de-escalation and redirection and they successfully engage children in the 'parking system', thereby significantly reducing the need for physical intervention. Children are closely involved in plans for their safety and staff enable them to help identify what will be of most help to them if their behaviour becomes heightened. Staff are flexible in their activity plans so that they can make quick and appropriate changes if children become upset or incidents occur.

The residential provision is well maintained and safe. Recruitment is safe, and the business manager has recently undertaken additional training to identify false documents. Excellent partnership working, including with families, is in place to share information that helps keep children safe. Staff handovers record any issues that might impact on children's safety, and ongoing communication and dialogue ensures that all staff have up-to-date information.

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

A strong, dynamic quality to leadership and management ensures that information flows into and around the system for the benefit of children. The head of care demonstrates rigorous attention to detail with a constant focus on the needs of the child. She expects the same rigour from staff, who demonstrate excellent knowledge and practice.

Practice is firmly grounded in research and staff and the head of care talk with knowledge and conviction about the models of practice that they use. One example of research-based practice that is implemented remarkably well is the 'Solution circles', when the child receives care to support their social, emotional and mental health needs, which are reflected in their individual targets that, in turn, link into their education, health care plans (EHCP). The head of care has developed a new assessment tool that captures and illustrates children's progress due to accessing the residential provision.

Staff work as a team and practice reflects the school motto of 'happy, safe, learning', which all the children know and understand. Staff are sensitive, perceptive and calm, which provides a sound platform for children to feel trusting and secure. Motivated, hardworking staff demonstrate in-depth knowledge of each child's care needs and show a high level of commitment to helping each child get the best out of the residential experience.

The residential provision is extremely well run with all aspects of care being thoughtfully planned. Files and documents are organised so that staff can access important information. The head of care diligently reviews policies and procedures and children's plans so that staff can be confident that they are up to date and relevant. If information for a child is not in place or of a good enough standard, staff are proactive in challenging services to provide information that is required. If this is still not met, staff escalate their concerns higher. An area for improvement is that controlled medication is not recorded in a bound book. This has not had an impact on the safety of children. However, good practice set by the royal pharmaceutical guidance safe handling of medication in children's residential care indicates that having a bound book is good practice.

Staff are up to date with their mandatory training and attend a wide range of additional training that is relevant to the needs of the children. The head of care provides staff with regular supervision, which enables them to feel strongly supported both personally and in their practice. Staff love working here and clearly take pride in the achievements of the team, management, and provision.

Planning is key to all the work undertaken with children and is skilfully based on the range of information provided for each child by the EHCP, staff observations, assessments by psychologists, and ongoing dialogue with family members. Children's progress is monitored via the new assessment tool. Each child's targets are easily understood by the child and require small achievable amounts of progress on a weekly basis. This results in children being able to see how much they have achieved and this is shared with their parents.

Internal and external monitoring is effective. Excellent ongoing consultation with children, parents, staff and professionals helps to inform the development of the service and enables the head of care to drive standards up even further.

Staff speak to parents weekly, providing updates on their child, and termly to review the child's targets. Parents are particularly pleased that staff call them with updates on positives and not just when there are concerns about their child.

The exceptional ability and knowledge of the head of care is recognised externally. She has been invited to speak at the 'Engage in Their Future' conference, which represents all Social Emotional Mental Health schools nationally.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what

difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC038726

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Neil Toplass

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Louise Whittle, social care inspector (lead)  
Michelle Spruce, social care inspector



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