

Cicely Haughton

Westwood Manor, Wetley Rocks, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST9 0BX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Cicely Haughton is part of the Manor Hall Academy. It offers day and residential places to girls and boys aged five to 11 years. There are 50 pupils on role and the school offers 33 residential places in its residential provision. The residential provision is part of the school's education curriculum offer. The head of care is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 February 2020

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

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

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: 8 January 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children love coming for residential stays and benefit hugely from warm and trusting relationships with dedicated staff. They go to the nurturing staff for hugs and reassurance. Children demonstrate that the residential provision is special to them and they feel a strong sense of ownership. Pictures of staff, children and regular visitors and also useful information are displayed on colourful noticeboards and keep children informed about what is going on on a day-to-day basis.

When children start their residential stays, the sensitive staff provide them with excellent support which helps them to settle. If a child is anxious about spending a night away from home, staff are on hand for them to talk to. Staff do whatever it takes to ensure that children are reassured and happy. Firm, consistent routines that meet the individual needs of each child provide them with a strong sense of security.

The provision is welcoming and comfortable, and children have personalised their bedrooms with pictures, bedding and toys. They enjoy relaxing together in sitting rooms at quiet time, have fun playing pool and table football in the games room and love playing outside. Creative staff skilfully enable children to engage in a wonderful range of stimulating games and trips out, regardless of their ability and confidence. Children's care for each other is exceptional. They express concern for each other and delight when others achieve. Children's achievements are celebrated daily at mealtimes with staff. This supports their self-esteem and helps them to value themselves and others.

Children make exceptional progress. They learn how to better manage their behaviour, their social skills develop and they become more able to play with other children and make friends. Children grow enormously in confidence and in their ability to engage in school. Children make significant academic progress, enabling many to go on to a mainstream school. The progress that children make also enhances their home life.

Staff involve children in discussions about their care and needs and encourage them to identify how staff can help them. Children understand how to complain and have access to the independent person. This means that children feel listened to and valued.

Staff constantly seek children's views. Children are given every opportunity to communicate their wishes and feelings, both individually to staff and in children's forums. Their concerns and requests are immediately addressed by staff, who provide them with age-appropriate feedback. Children enthusiastically choose meals and activities in regular children's meetings and the staff ensure that each child's wishes are considered and met, when possible.

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

Highly trained, vigilant staff keep children safe, and children say that they feel safe. Children do not go missing from the residential provision and are not subject to child exploitation, radicalisation or online abuse. Staff are alert to these issues and demonstrate excellent knowledge and practice. They understand the vulnerabilities of each child.

There is a strong ethos of valuing each other and being kind. Consequently, there are no concerns about bullying when children have residential stays. Staff involved children in writing the anti-bullying policy, and the children are aware of the procedures. Children engaged in an anti-bullying week in November. Staff talk to children individually and in groups about how to keep themselves safe.

Staff have a strong focus on children's mental health and well-being. Staff are experienced, perceptive and trained to understand the reasons behind children's behaviour. Staff talk to children about mental and emotional well-being. Close liaison with families ensures that staff are informed about changes in children's moods and circumstances and are aware of anything that indicates that a child could be at risk.

Positive relationships between children and staff are central to the highly effective behaviour management strategies that staff employ. This calm and consistent approach keeps children safe, both in the residential provision and in the community. Clear and appropriate boundaries and expectations enable children to feel secure and safe and to relax in the residential provision. They increasingly understand and manage their own emotions and explore these in individual and group sessions, which develop their social skills and self-esteem. Staff know each child well and are aware of the potential triggers to their behaviours.

Overall, safeguarding practice is a strength of this service. The systems for the storage and administration of medication are robust and closely monitored. Recruitment practices are safe. The 'My concerns' system involves all staff in identifying and reporting any safeguarding concerns, and it is closely and effectively monitored by the senior leadership team. When safeguarding issues arise, the response is rapid and appropriate.

Incidents are well managed, and physical intervention is rarely used. However, the service is not yet fully compliant with fire safety regulations. At the time of the inspection, the senior leadership team had not yet completed all of the actions highlighted in a report by the fire and rescue service, received at the end of January 2020. The senior leadership team has plans in place to update its fire assessment and address the remaining points of concern. Although the governors were aware of this issue, they had not been provided with a copy of the report. This shortfall has not had a negative impact on children, who are fully aware of, and practised in, the fire-drill procedure.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The child-focused, dedicated head of care is passionate about making the residential provision the best that it can be. She works in close collaboration with the school to ensure that they provide highly vulnerable children with consistent, nurturing care.

The staff team is cohesive and exceptionally effective. Staff strongly value the support that they receive from the head of care and from each other. The head of care provides staff with regular, reflective supervision which both supports and challenges their practice and enhances their professional development. The head of care listens to staff and actively seeks new ideas from them. She is supporting one staff member to undertake a 'hill skills' course that he identified, so that he can complete even more creative and stimulating work with children. Another staff member is about to start the level 5 diploma.

Staff meetings are regular and child focused. Staff are attentive and clear about their roles and tasks. Staff have experienced a challenging period since the last inspection due to uncertainty about the continued funding of the residential provision. There have also been some staff shortages (now resolved). Staff and managers have risen to these challenges. Their hard work has ensured that children continue to receive an outstanding quality of care and continue to make exceptional progress.

The managerial monitoring of the school is excellent and includes peer audits and regular visits from the independent person and governors. The school governors are closely involved in the residential provision. They support the head of care and are confident to challenge leaders when needed. The head of care gathers regular feedback from children, staff and families, which informs her practice and the development plan for the residential provision.

The head of care is constantly developing the service and promoting research-informed practice. Since the last inspection, she has developed a 'life-skills audit' that measures children's progress in the residential provision against fundamental skills. This progress is then tracked and linked to the targets that are set for children. This enables progress to be shared and celebrated, and is also used as an assessment tool when considering how to support children to move on to senior or mainstream school.

Managers and staff work extremely well with children's families and partner agencies, including local authorities, children's homes and schools. This ensures that valuable information about children is shared. Feedback from others is overwhelmingly positive about the service and the support that children receive. For example, the parent of one child said, 'This service gives all [children] an environment to grow and to become responsible, both in their behaviour and their personal standing.'

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(s) for residential special schools:

- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.

Recommendations

- That the governors receive copies of significant health and safety reports.

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: SC038731

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Paul Spreadbury

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Louise Whittle, social care inspector (lead)

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