

Wyre Forest School

Wyre Forest School, Habberley Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 6FA
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school is a local authority service and is directly responsible to a governing body. Wyre Forest School is a special school catering for children who have a broad range of needs, including physical, social, emotional and learning difficulties. The school moved to a new purpose-built site in April 2015. This site includes a residential aspect of the school called Russell House. This opened in September 2014 prior to the whole school move. It operates from Monday to Friday. It can accommodate up to 16 children between the ages of eight and 19. There were 12 children receiving a service at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 27 February to 1 March 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 13 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Children make good progress in all areas of their development and thrive in this setting.
- Staff adopt a thorough, inclusive and comprehensive approach to promoting children's safety and welfare.
- Managers and staff are motivated and committed. They promote a 'can do' culture that includes acting on children's views and wishes.
- Children receive nurturing care that enables them to flourish educationally, socially, physically and emotionally.
- Partnership work with families is positive and effective. These relationships focus on meeting children's needs and enhancing their day-to-day experiences.
- Effective communication between residential managers, residential staff, school leaders and teaching staff is the focus of the day-to-day operation of the service. This means that children benefit from integrated support.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that statutory and internal education plans include the contribution that residency makes to helping children to achieve their educational, social and emotional learning targets.
- Review internal complaints procedures to ensure that these are child friendly and reflective of children's differing learning abilities and communication preferences.
- Ensure that fire risk assessments include a clear statement to demonstrate decision-making considerations relating to children's personal evacuation plans.
- Ensure that effective links and service level agreements with commissioned health agencies cover children's time in residency.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress in the development of social, emotional, educational, cognitive and practical skills, taking into account their starting points. This is because committed and knowledgeable staff work with education staff and health professionals to determine children's bespoke needs. Staff deliver care and support that reflects these needs and, as a result, children blossom.

This purpose-built residential provision offers children a bright, welcoming and vibrant environment. Relationships between children and staff are positive and nurturing. Staff use these relationships to encourage children to identify their own targets and to help them to understand the targets and goals set by others, such as allocated teaching staff. These collaborations and consultations promote children's personal progress and help them to thrive.

Children say that they are happy in residency and are confident that managers will address any concerns that they raise. However, the internal complaints procedure is not child friendly, and does not take account of children's differing learning needs and communication styles.

Children are proud of their achievements and embrace the opportunities that residency affords them. Consequently, children's confidence and self-esteem grow. One parent said, 'The staff at residency have supported him superbly and have given him the confidence to cope with new challenges and planned changes to routine.'

Staff work well with children's families. Parents and carers speak with enthusiasm about the impact that this service has on children's development. One parent said, 'Over the past 12 months especially I have seen [name of child] grow and flourish. It's amazing really and residency definitely deserve some of the credit for that.' This union between families and staff helps children to have a positive residential experience.

Children participate in a wide range of stimulating, fun and educational activities. They are involved in decisions about how they spend their time in residency and who they spend their time with. Staff encourage children to access community facilities, participate in trips and to try new things.

Managers and staff make sure that children's bespoke needs do not restrict their activity options. Staff structure children's residential experience around celebrating their abilities. This helps children to achieve their individual goals and targets.

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

Children are safe and protected from harm. Staff routinely identify, assess and manage risks to children's safety and introduce strategies to reduce these. When necessary, they devise behaviour plans that combine the use of incentives and rewards. These help children to learn to manage their own behaviours and consider, when relevant, how their actions may impact on others. This helps children to

develop the social skills that they need to prosper in a group living environment.

The use of sanctions is exceptionally rare. This is because staff emphasise children's strengths, continually praise their achievements and reward positive behaviours. Children benefit from clear and consistent boundaries that help them to reflect on their actions and reduce their anxieties. Staff competently and confidently use verbal and non-verbal communication methods to inspire and motivate children to make positive choices. As a result, there has been only one incident of physical restraint since the last inspection. This comprehensive approach to managing children's behaviour promotes children's safety and welfare.

School-wide safeguarding and child protection procedures encompass children's time in residency. Staff are exceptionally alert to any changes in children's physical presentation and behaviours that may indicate abuse or harm. Staff work with senior school leaders and residential managers to ensure that all concerns are appropriately referred, managed and recorded. Consequently, staff protect children from harm.

Staff participate in annual safeguarding training, which is bespoke to the school and residential environment. This ensures that staff fully understand their role and responsibility in keeping children safe. Safeguarding training also includes information relating to bullying, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalisation. This means that, along with consistent governance and monitoring by the designated officer, senior managers and the nominated governor, good safeguarding practice is at the forefront of residential routines. This helps to keep children safe.

All residential and school staff are subject to appropriate recruitment processes. Recruitment records include verified employment references and a range of suitability checks. Consequently, staff are deemed safe to work with the children.

Support staff regularly undertake relevant health and safety, fire safety and environmental checks. They quickly address any known hazards or risk to children's safety to ensure that children reside in a safe and secure environment. Managers continually review fire risk assessments to ensure that these reflect children's individual needs. However, decisions made by senior managers to evacuate all children in the event of a fire, as agreed by the fire and rescue service, and not rely on containment behind fire doors, are not clearly stated within these risk assessments.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, the residential manager has left the service and a new manager has recently been appointed. Strong and effective interim management arrangements include daily oversight of the service by the school's senior leadership team. All 12 shortfalls identified at the last inspection have been addressed.

Senior leaders and the new head of care are committed and inspirational. They recognise that the improvements made to date form the basis of the on-going development of the service. Leaders and managers understand the importance of

embedding good and innovative practice into the daily routines in residency, and how this culture supports children's progress and development.

Residential managers focus their attention on cementing the aspirational 'can do' culture. With the support of the headteacher, managers and staff continually assess and review children's progress to evaluate the impact that residency has on their development. Leaders, managers, staff, governors and independent visitors continually assess and evaluate the residential provision, and review and amend internal policies and procedures. This ensures that they have a clear understanding of the service's strengths and any areas for development.

Staff are positive about their role. They say that, following a period of instability and uncertainty, dedicated managers have now 'reignited their passion'. Managers ensure that staff have the skills and experience that they need to support children. Managers continually seek to offer new training and development opportunities and encourage staff to reflect on their performance. Consequently, staff practice continues to evolve to meet children's changing needs.

Partnerships between leaders and managers, and externally commissioned support services and professionals, are mostly positive. It is essential that, as the service moves forward, senior managers ensure that service level agreements incorporate the residential aspect of children's education. For example, statutory education plans do not explicitly detail the positive impact that residency has on all aspects of children's development.

Professional relationships are further supported by an active and knowledgeable governing body. The governing body fully understands the positive impact residency has on children's progress and development, and the need to ensure that standards of good care and support are maintained. This level of scrutiny means that children are supported to thrive in residency and that access to this service enhances their day-to-day experiences.

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: SC490122

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Rebecca Garratt

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01562 827785

Email address: office@wfs.worcs.sch.uk

Inspectors

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector (lead)
Andrew Waugh, HMI social care



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