

# 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

Wyre Forest School is a special school for children and young people with a broad range of needs, including physical, social, emotional and learning difficulties. The school is a local authority service and is directly responsible to a governing body.

The residential aspect of the service operates from Monday to Friday and can accommodate up to 15 children and young people. There were 12 children and young people staying at the residency at the time of the inspection.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

### Inspection dates: 4 to 6 March 2025

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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:** 26 February 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

There were 12 children present during the inspection. The inspectors saw all of the children and spent time communicating and playing with them.

Children thrive and make excellent progress in this residential provision because they are surrounded by carers who have high aspirations for them. Children have close bonds with carers, who show them what it means to be valued and respected. Interactions between carers and children are playful, affectionate and nurturing. Children trust carers because their support is consistent, and their commitment and enthusiasm are unwavering.

When children move in, they are warmly welcomed by their peers and carers. They quickly develop a sense of belonging because they enter an environment where kindness, tolerance and inclusion are championed. Children develop friendships, and for some, this is a new experience, and it makes their visits appealing and enjoyable. Children can personalise their bedrooms, and their photos and achievements are proudly displayed on walls and screens.

Children's education targets are jointly agreed by parents, teachers and carers. Children benefit from a tailored learning experience that extends beyond the classroom and into the residential environment. Children make exceptional progress against their targets because carers recognise opportunities for learning, as well as creating them.

Carers and leaders are committed to ensuring children's voices are amplified. They have established various avenues for children to share their views, including the advocacy service. Carers know that consistency in language, and visual communication tools, are central to helping children express themselves. This has inspired them to create a communication system that is used across the school. They have delivered training to parents and external services such as nurseries, short breaks and mainstream schools, which is extremely impressive.

Carers organise activities that enrich children's lives. For example, swimming, playing golf and attending adventure playgrounds. Children have discos and karaoke competitions; they are amused when carers pretend to be hosts and waitresses. Carers skilfully balance creating a fun atmosphere with teaching children about responsibilities. For example, children are allocated domestic chores so that they each contribute to the smooth running of the provision.

Leaders and carers are committed to ensuring that children develop independence skills that will benefit them in the future. This includes learning how to tell the time, understanding their medication needs and how to physically care for themselves.

Carers promote children's dignity while helping them to achieve goals. Some older children have been supported to volunteer in the school café and in the maintenance team. This has undoubtedly boosted their confidence and social skills.

Admissions are carefully planned by leaders. Parents and professionals are involved at an early stage so that leaders can develop insight into children's lived experiences, needs and vulnerabilities. Carers build relationships with children by visiting them before they start overnight visits. Children's views are considered, and the pace of transition is determined by them. When it is time for children to move on, carers support them by taking them to view new provisions and talking to them about what to expect.

Parents spoke highly of the exemplary care provided by the residential provision. They told inspectors that their children thoroughly enjoyed their visits and wanted to return as soon as possible. They highlighted the remarkable progress their children have made since joining the provision and expressed gratitude for the service.

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

Carers have an excellent understanding of risks to children and safeguarding procedures. This ensures that children are always kept safe when staying at the school.

Children are very settled, and consequently, carers rarely see any behaviours of concern. Carers have a strong understanding of children's individual needs, and they take steps to minimise factors that could cause them frustration and distress. This includes being mindful of how children's behaviours impact their peers and using appropriate strategies to avoid tension between children. Carers have not used any physical interventions since the last inspection.

Carers help children to understand socially acceptable behaviours. Some of these lessons are delivered through everyday interactions, for example reminding children of 'personal space bubbles' when they become excitable and helping them to reflect on their behaviour. Carers also deliver 'Let's Talk' sessions, where they instigate conversations that help children to think about their safety and well-being. Sessions cover a range of topics, including healthy relationships, consent and mental well-being.

Carers are proactive in recording and reporting any causes of concern. When children share their worries, carers respond appropriately by listening to them and using curiosity to better understand their experiences. If necessary, leaders escalate concerns to the local authority, highlighting increased risks around children. In some instances, they challenge the decisions made by external professionals, improving outcomes for children.

When leaders identify that families are struggling, they liaise with parents and allocate family support workers to help them with specific tasks. This includes parenting support, securing school transport and increasing school attendance. The family support workers have also supported children through bereavements, which goes above and beyond the service remit.

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

The headteacher is an inspirational leader who has successfully embedded a positive culture and ethos in the residential special school. Leaders and carers have embraced the headteacher's vision and strengthen it every day by delivering excellent care, placing the children's well-being at the heart of decisions. Children are ambitious and have high expectations of themselves because leaders and carers champion them.

Despite the demands on their time, the senior leadership team members are well known to the children and have forged relationships with them. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the children's needs and how to support them to achieve targets. There is fluid information-sharing between residential staff, school and parents. Their collaborative approach means that everyone works towards the same goals, and this consistency is hugely beneficial to children.

Since the last inspection, the head of care has allocated specific lead responsibilities to carers, and this has resulted in some remarkable developments, for example homegrown research that has been shared externally. Leaders motivate carers by conducting their own research, for example exploring children's transitional experiences and creating a toolkit to help children with sexualised behaviours. Parents and external professionals have welcomed their insights and support.

The senior leadership team members are influential, reflective and open to learning. They have weekly safeguarding discussions and monthly governor meetings to explore actions, strengths and areas for development. These meetings involve some respectful challenge while remaining solution focused and improvement driven. The commitment and oversight of the senior leadership team are exceptional.

## **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:** SC490122

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Rebecca Garratt

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspectors**

Tara Webb, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Nicola Lownds, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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