

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. Wyre Forest 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. This is the school's third inspection of residential services.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 March 2018

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 11 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is judged requires improvement to be good because:

- Progress across all areas of children's development is difficult to identify because of a lack of clear target planning, reviewing and monitoring.
- Children's targets are too broad and do not allow even the smallest of achievements to be celebrated.
- Children's health and cultural needs are not reflected in their care plans.
- Risk assessments and behavioural management plans lack vital information.
- There is a lack of management overview of restraints and sanctions used by residential staff.
- Residential care staff do not have access to vital information about the children that they care for.
- Staff fail to assess children's safety when they are using the internet.
- Leadership and monitoring are weak and fail to be compliant with the national minimum standards for residential special schools in 11 areas.
- The manager has not received regular supervision.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Children have made progress in moderating their behaviour.
- Children enjoy the safe and warm environment of the school.
- Children get to participate in a wide range of activities.
- Children show loyalty to their school community and have mainly positive views about their residential experiences.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- Where necessary, a child has a clear individual health and welfare plan or similar record, containing relevant health and welfare information provided by parents/carers and recording significant health and welfare needs and issues. This record should be agreed by parents/carers and include: records of developmental checks; health monitoring required by staff; intimate care or bodily functions requiring staff help; and the involvement of a child's parents/carers or significant others in health and welfare issues. (National Minimum Standard 3.12)
- All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (National Minimum Standard 12.5)
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (National Minimum Standard 12.6)
- The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. (National Minimum Standard 13.3)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (National Minimum Standard 13.4)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (National Minimum Standard 13.8)
- The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate. (National Minimum Standard 13.9)
- All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (National Minimum Standard 19.6)
- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and

equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (National Minimum Standard 20.2)

- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere, such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet, and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan, there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. (National Minimum Standard 21.1)
- Every child has an accurate, permanent record of their history and progress which can be read by the child at any time (except where the data controller is not obliged to supply the information to the child), and add personal statements or statements correcting errors. (National Minimum Standard 22.1)
- Each child's file includes the information in Appendix 2 (individual records). (National Minimum Standard 22.2)

Recommendations

- Ensure that consideration is given to helping children to safely use their own technology devices.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The relationship between staff and children is good overall. Children show loyalty to their school community and have mostly positive views about their residential experiences. However, children's residential targets are often far too broad. For example, one child's target states: 'To be able to dress, wash, and change with limited support, to remember fastenings are secure and to accept direction when clothing is wrong.' In some cases, children have had the same targets for over 12 months. The lack of informed records makes it difficult to see whether children actually make any progress in meeting these targets.

Children and their parents are encouraged to visit and walk around the residential service before making a decision about whether they wish to access the residential provision. These initial visits enable children to learn about the layout of the residential provision and to find out about the different activities. They are also given the opportunity to meet other children who already use the residential service.

When new children decide to join the residential provision, important information about their care is not always made available to the residential care staff. For example, managers do not ensure that impact risk assessments have been carried out. Due to a lack of training residential staff are unaware of how access to information held by the school about each child. This means that residential care staff are not able to read children's risk assessments, education and healthcare plans, personal evacuation plans and communication passports. Leaders and managers were not aware of this problem until inspection. Work has now commenced to resolve this problem.

The opportunities for children to acquire practical life skills to help them to prepare for adult life have not been fully developed. Leaders and the manager recognise that more resources are required to help to support children to develop their independence skills.

The residential provision is a vibrant place. Each child has access to a range of activities. For example, children can use the cinema room, the art room and large lounge area for socialising. Children participate in the wider community. Some children have made good progress in moderating their own behaviour and can now go out for meals in restaurants. One child told the inspector, 'I like it here, we do lots of activities.'

Overall, the accommodation and facilities provide a safe, pleasant and stimulating environment that meets the needs of the children.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Individual risk assessments lack detail and are not kept up to date. For example, one child requires extra support to leave the building at night. This important information is not included in the child's risk assessment. Behaviour management plans do not give residential care staff all the essential details. This is because these plans only relate to the school day.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff have access to training and procedures to help them to recognise situations that can be indicators of a child being at risk of harm, including exploitation, neglect, abuse, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation. Residential care staff use this acquired knowledge so that children are safeguarded effectively.

Residential care staff only use physical intervention as a last resort. However, the systems for monitoring the use of physical interventions are weak. Senior managers do not review records to help them identify trends and patterns and to ensure that all staff apply a consistent approach. Records lack detail, reflection and evaluation. Although children and care staff are offered debriefs after a restraint, the member of staff who was directly involved in the restraint can often be the person who will talk to the child. Residential care staff use sanctions to help improve children's behaviour. However, this type of measure of control is not recorded. This is a direct breach of the national minimum standards.

The school has internet filters installed to help to block certain social media sites in an attempt to keep children safe. However, children are able to bypass these filters when using their own devices and mobile phones. Leaders and managers were not aware that systems were not sufficiently secure until this risk was identified during the inspection. Leaders and managers took immediate action during the inspection to improve children's internet safety.

Residential care staff ensure that children receive their medication in line with their prescribing doctor's instructions. All staff receive appropriate training to ensure that they can respond appropriately to any child's health needs. However, managers do not ensure that staff obtain written consent from parents for the use of first aid.

Regular health and safety checks, alongside routine servicing of equipment, help to make sure that the residential provision remains safe for children, staff and visitors. Fire drills are carried out regularly. These take place at different times of the day and night.

There is a well-established system in place for the safe recruitment of staff, and this extends to assessing their suitability to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and management are not focused enough on the areas in which practice needs to improve. Areas of monitoring and review are weak and this means that shortfalls in practice are missed and go unchallenged. These shortfalls are seen in care planning, behaviour management and in how children develop their life skills.

Residential care staff do have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but do not have all the required resources to ensure that their practice remains child-centred. This is most noticeable in the lack of knowledge that they have of the care planning that surrounds a child's development.

Staff feel supported and have access to more training than they did before. They also receive regular supervision. However, the head of care has not had the same opportunity to reflect on his practice.

Inspectors were told that there had been no complaints. However, this was not the case and showed that internal and external systems are failing to highlight shortfalls. This lack of scrutiny means that leaders and managers have missed the opportunity to reflect on practice and to develop the residential service. The headteacher has acknowledged all the shortfalls that have arisen from this inspection. She has introduced an action plan to ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards.

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

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Inspectors

Louise Battersby, social care inspector (lead)
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