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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 and young people who have a broad range of needs, including physical, social, emotional and learning difficulties. There are 285 children on roll at the school. 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 and young people between the ages of eight and 19. There were 10 young people receiving a service at the time of the inspection. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2019.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 December 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: 27 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people receive personalised care from consistent and committed staff. Individualised and well thought out targets link in with school objectives and help young people to receive positive and coordinated experiences and support. As a result of good support, young people make progress with their learning, independence and emotional well-being.

Staff actively support young people's learning by helping to ensure that young people complete their homework. Good communication between residential staff and teachers includes face-to-face handovers and a daily diary. Regular reviews of young people's progress help young people to achieve educationally. As a result, all the young people who use the residential service achieved their targets in reading, writing, numbers, shapes and measures for the last academic year.

Young people are positive about their experiences in residence. They have opportunities to be involved in a wide range of activities, both on-site and in the local community. On-site, young people have the use of an art room, games room, a cinema suite, a swimming pool and a well-equipped outdoor area. This is complemented by a range of community-based activities, including bowling, going to the cinema and shopping trips. Young people say that they enjoy visits from a therapy dog and more recently they have started to attend a local youth club. Involvement in a diverse range of interesting activities helps young people to build friendships and develop their skills and talents.

Staff encourage young people to take increased responsibility for their own personal care, as well as contributing to making sure that the house routines run well. For example, young people routinely help to lay the table and pack the dishwasher. A focus on supporting young people to do more for themselves and others helps them to become more independent, to develop a sense of responsibility and to be better equipped for adult life.

Gaining and acting on the views of young people are taken seriously by staff. Young people's communication needs are known, and staff work hard to help young people communicate in their preferred form. This includes young people having an accessible complaints procedure. An independent person visits the young people regularly. Student forums give young people the opportunity to choose activities and share ideas and suggestions for the development of the residential service. Young people talked with enthusiasm about the development of a communication area and how this gives them the opportunity to express if they have any worries or concerns in their individual style. When young people use the area, managers act promptly to respond to what young people say. As a result, young people feel that they are listened to and have an influence over their care.

Parents were unanimously positive about their relationships with staff and the

benefits of residency to the young people. Staff recognise the importance of young people keeping in touch with parents and carers during their stays and phone calls and visits by parents and carers are encouraged. Maintaining significant relationships helps young people to feel reassured and to get the best out of their stays.

Staff try hard to help young people to maintain good health. For example, young people respond well to encouragement from staff to make healthy food choices and to consider their portion sizes. Some young people take medication and staff are trained to safely handle medicines. However, staff are not always consistent in their practice. For example, on one occasion, staff did not assure themselves that a young person had swallowed their medication. Inconsistencies in practice could compromise the good health of young people.

The residential accommodation is clean, tidy and well presented. All of the young people have a dedicated permanent bedroom. This allows them to personalise their bedrooms to their own taste and leave belongings as they wish ready for their next stay. This gives a home-from-home feeling. However, young people are unable to lock their own bedroom door. This is a missed opportunity to increase their privacy and sense of independence.

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

Young people say that they feel safe and they enjoy the company of staff.

Staff know the young people well and ensure that there are appropriate measures in place to reduce risk. Residential staff are trained to recognise safeguarding issues. The head of care attends regular whole-school safeguarding meetings, which ensure a swift response when safeguarding issues arise.

A clear understanding of young people's needs, behaviours and risks, combined with a calm and nurturing approach from staff, means that incidents are rare. When challenging situations do arise, low stimulus responses from staff help young people to regulate their behaviours and to feel better quickly. Consequently, there have only been two instances when staff have needed to hold a young person for safety reasons since the last inspection. Staff celebrate progress and success and this gives young people a sense of pride and promotes positive behaviour.

Young people know each other well and enjoy each other's company. On the rare occasions when disagreements arise between young people, staff are quick to respond to reduce conflict and to help young people repair their relationships.

Every young person is provided with an electronic tablet that is protected by parental controls. This reduces the likelihood of young people accessing unsuitable content. Posters displayed in the residential service and online training for young people help them to be aware of the risks posed by the internet and help young people to become increasingly safe.

There is an established and well-maintained system for ensuring the suitability of staff to work with young people in the residential service. Good safer recruitment protects young people from harm.

Routine servicing and checks take place as required in the residential service and the premises are well maintained. Leaders have acted upon a recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure that the fire risk assessment is clear about their rationale for evacuation in the event of a fire. However, leaders have not ensured that fire drills are conducted in keeping with young people's evacuation plans or with minimum levels of staff on duty. This potentially places young people at risk in the event of a fire.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care has been in post since April 2019, having previously worked as part of the residential team.

Weekly meetings with the headteacher ensure that the head of care has regular access to advice and guidance. This helps to ensure an integrated approach between the school and the residency. For example, at the time of the inspection, residential staff were involved in a whole-school project to develop a system to better capture the learning journeys of young people across school, home and the residential service.

The head of care is well supported by the deputy head of care. Both are respected by staff, parents and professionals alike. Since the last inspection, managers have acted to ensure that a service level agreement between the school and the local healthcare trust is extended to include the residential service. This means that the school nurse is now able to visit young people in the residential setting and deliver training to residential staff. Managers have also ensured that the role of residency is clear in young people's education, health and care plans. These developments bring a more joined-up approach to the care of young people.

Staff are passionate about their work and are confident in the ability of the team to provide safe care that helps young people to make progress. The opportunity of residential specific training, whole-school training and regular residency staff meetings help staff to understand their roles and responsibilities. New staff are positive about the support they have during their inductions. However, new staff do not always receive supervision in accordance with the frequency and duration set out within the supervision agreements. This reduces the opportunity for new staff to reflect on their work and their areas of strength and development.

Managers have a thorough understanding of young people's plans and progress and young people's plans are kept up to date. However, managers do not always ensure that records of physical intervention are sufficiently detailed. For example, one record did not fully note the technique staff used when holding a young person and one record did not include the details of a debrief with the young person. This reduces

the manager's ability to understand if there is any learning arising from staff practice.

Senior leaders are passionate about the residential service and have high aspirations for the young people. This extends to the governing body that has a strong focus on ensuring that the residential service is part of a whole-school approach to supporting young people to achieve. Governors are active in their oversight of the residential service to help them gain an understanding of the strengths and development areas for the service. However, leaders have not ensured that independent visits happen as is required by the national minimum standards. This is a lost opportunity to understand the detail of young people's day-to-day experiences and to drive improvement.

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:

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that fire drills are carried out in keeping with children's personal evacuation plans and with staffing levels at a minimum.
- Ensure that staff receive supervision in accordance with the frequency and duration set out within supervision agreements.
- Ensure that all records of physical interventions are detailed and accurately reflect actions of staff and that children's views are always sought after they have been held.
- Ensure that training on the safe handling of medication helps staff to consolidate their understanding about the expectations for administering medicines.
- Ensure that children's and young people's privacy is enhanced through being able to lock their own bedrooms.

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

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Inspectors

Alison Cooper, social care inspector (lead)

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