

Gretton School

MANOR FARM ROAD, GIRTON, CAMBRIDGE, CB3 0RX

Inspection dates

16/11/2015 to 18/11/2015

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Good 2

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The young people make progress as a result of the residential provision.
- The provision prepares the young people well for adulthood.
- The young people report feeling safe. The staff are able to manage young people's behaviour through positive interactions.
- There are strong relationships between staff and young people. Feedback from families is consistently positive.
- The young people engage in a variety of social and leisure activities.
- Staff receive regular, supportive and challenging supervision.
- Some records require improving. This includes the need to improve risk assessments, better capture evidence of young people's progress, record young people's views following the use of disciplinary measures, make sure the missing children policy reflects expected practice and improve the effectiveness of management monitoring processes

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the residential service develops a system to evidence and record individual progress to show the impact of the residential provision has on residential pupil development.
- Ensure the residential service captures the views and feelings of children and young people following the use of any measure of control or discipline.
- Ensure that the school policy in relation to missing children is consistent with practice in the residential provision.

- Ensure that young people's risk assessments are thorough, accurate and updated as necessary.
- Ensure that management monitoring systems are robust, challenging and contribute to the identification of shortfalls and subsequent improvement.

Information about this inspection

This standalone inspection began three hours following announcement. The inspection included observation of the three residential provisions, observation of practice, and scrutiny of documents. The inspector met with residential pupils and staff and spoke by telephone to parents. There were no recent Ofsted surveys or Parent View survey responses to inform the inspection.

Inspection team

Ashley Hinson

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Privately owned, Gretton school is an independent residential special school for pupils of mixed gender aged between 5 and 19 years. Located on the outskirts of Cambridge, the school specialises in teaching children and young people with autistic spectrum conditions. The school had eighty eight pupils on roll at the time of the inspection, eight of whom reside at the school for four nights a week. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses and one bungalow located on the school site. The boarding provision was last inspected in March 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The young people feel safe in the residential provision. The provision meets their social, emotional and health needs. They make personal and academic progress as a result of their residential experience. Feedback from families and young people highlight the progress that young people have made since coming to stay in the residential provision. A parent said: 'It has raised his school performance a lot and given us our boy back.'

The young people spoke of having made improvements in their independence and social skills. A young person commented: 'I am more sociable and more independent.' Another young person said: 'I have become more independent. I am really independent now. They help you to have an independence plan. I get to walk to the shops.' Parents reinforced this. Annual reviews show the progress that young people have made over the course of the academic year. However, the home has not yet developed an effective system to capture the evidence of progress outside of this time frame as they would like.

The staff are highly regarded by families and support the young people to develop trusted and secure relationships within the residential provision. The young people's views are sought and acted upon. Observations of interactions between staff and young people showed the strength of some of these relationships. A parent said: 'She has formed relationships in the past but has not felt able to express herself. They have got her to communicate much better than ever she did before. She has begun to open up with staff. This is because of the relationships she has developed.' The staff also support the young people to get on with one another. There have been no incidents of bullying. Observations of young people show them developing an understanding of the needs and behaviours of their residential peers.

The young people are supported to develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful transition to adulthood. This was a particular strength of the provision. Young people have life skills plans that maximise their independence. These include developing the ability to travel independently, for example, taking a walk to the village shop or catching a bus into the local city. As a result the service prepares young people well for the next stage of life after school.

The residential provision has strong links with the school. The head of care is part of the schools senior management team. Regular meetings take place with key staff involved in the young people's lives. Residential day staff also work in the education setting. This contributes further to that partnership working. There is also an opportunity for staff to get together in a 'thinking space'. This involves all the key professionals involved in a young person's school and residential care such as their teacher, teaching assistant, behaviour support team, music therapist and key worker holding a focussed meeting for that child. This enables the group to identify ways in which they can overcome difficulties as a team. A member of staff said: 'We look at the young person's struggles and aspirations. If there has been something that they have been struggling with you can focus on that.'

The young people's behaviour is consistently good. They report liking boarding at the school. Parents reinforce the impression that young people are happy to attend. One parent said: 'If you were to ask him he would probably shrug his shoulders but on Monday morning he gets into the taxi with no hesitation whatsoever. He is much happier now and like the young person we used to have.'

The quality of care and support

Good

The staff team show genuine warmth and care for young people. They work hard to ensure that the support provided meets the young people's needs. The staff want the best for the young people and young people recognise this. A young person said: 'The thing is the staff really want to help you improve.' The staff and young people engage in regular key work sessions. Senior managers monitor these sessions and both the key worker and the young person involved sign them off.

The residential accommodation is of a high standard. The young people are able to personalise their rooms. The level of personalisation varies from young person to young person. Most of the bedrooms were seen and all were sufficient for the needs of the young people. The young people appeared at home and relaxed in the accommodation.

The young people report engaging in a variety of activities. A young person said: 'I get to do loads. I get to go out.' These include activities designed to promote independence. Activities have included gaming nights, DVDs, trips into town, and sports activities. There are pictures on the wall of trips young people have participated in. These activities include engagement with the wider community. Young people are involved in youth clubs and sports clubs. This further increases their socialisation and increases their independence skills as well as meeting their leisure needs.

Young people's health needs are met within the residential provision. Whilst parents maintain responsibility for routine health appointments the home manages the day to day medical needs of the young people well. Arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective. A robust process has been introduced to ensure that all staff are safe and competent to administer medications. Records are clear.

Mealtimes are a warm, social experience. The young people prepare food for one another. Food is healthy and fresh. The young people and staff sit and eat together. This significantly contributes to the overall homely feel of the residential provision.

Residents meetings take place and young people contribute to the everyday decisions about life in the residential provision. They get to choose the meals that they will be having and to plan activities. The staff and young people consistently engage in debate and discussion in a warm, friendly and respectful manner. Discussions varied from horror films, technology and moral panics to favourite foods and football teams. This helps young people to further develop their understanding of socialisation. They are able to see adults who are caring for them taking an interest in their views and opinions.

The young people are able to contact their families whilst staying in the residential provision. They have access to phones in the homes. Parents report that staff in the home provide feedback and that communication is good. A parent said: 'The staff are

really nice, easy to talk to and give you info. They ring if you are worried. You can tell them anything.' Another stated: 'The staff keep us informed of what we need to know.' Discussions with staff showed an empathic insight into the views and experiences of family carers.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people report feeling safe in the home. They are able to identify people who they can talk to, who they can share concerns with or make complaints to. The staff are clear about the expectations regarding reporting any safeguarding concerns. They are able to identify the named safeguarding leads within the service and to locate the whistleblowing policy. Each of the residential accommodations has a variety of posters informing staff and young people who they can contact if they have any concerns.

A variety of relevant training courses are available for staff. The staff have received training in extremism, bullying and equality and diversity. There have been no instances of bullying being reported with the residential provision. The staff are alert to the possibility and able to identify potential signs that bullying may be taking place. Mandatory courses cover the risks associated with child sexual exploitation. Work takes place in the school to educate young people about the risks posed by the internet.

There have been very few physical interventions or sanctions since the last inspection. The staff are able to manage young people's behaviour through positive interactions and the knowledge they have of them. When sanctions have been applied these have been proportionate. The sanctions log does not explicitly capture the views of the young person regarding the sanction. As a result the record is missing this key perspective.

No young people have gone missing from the residential provision. The policy in relation to missing children is inconsistent with the needs and individual risk assessments of young people using the residential services. The policy does not allow for staff to contact police when a young person goes missing unless this is authorised by a member of the senior management team. For some young people the fact they are missing should automatically lead to contact with the police. Any delay to this would jeopardise their safety.

Risk assessments need to improve. They do not consistently consider all predictable risks and updates are not always thorough. For example, staff have not signed one key risk assessment. One young person's risk assessment did not include reference to a particularly concerning historical behaviour. Another is not sufficiently explicit regarding behaviour that has taken place outside of the residential provision. Whilst these shortfalls do not appear to have had a negative impact on the overall care experience, unaddressed they have the potential to do so in the future.

The staff follow health and safety procedures. Regular fire tests and drills have taken place within the residential provision. Since the last inspection the head of care has recruited one member of staff to work in the residential provision. The recruitment process was consistent with safer recruitment processes and procedures.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

An experienced manager is in post, supported by an experienced team leader. They are passionate about the service they lead and are strong advocates for the young people and the staff who look after them. The service aims to increase the life skills of the young people who board at the school and the staff support the young people to regularly achieve these aims.

There has been a relatively high turnover of frontline staff over recent months. The reasons for staff departures have varied and there appears to be no underlying theme to this. The service has managed these changes without negative impact on the young people. This is particularly positive given the young peoples need for consistency and stability.

The head of care does not work directly on shift, which means that monitoring of day to day practice through shadowing and observation is down to the team leader. The team leader is also the person who carries out the monitoring of paperwork such as risk assessments. She also conducts all of the supervisions of residential staff. This impacts upon the depth of day to day monitoring that can take place. As a result case records are of variable quality. Some records are of a very high quality whilst others need improvement. Independent visitors undertaken half termly visits to the residential provision and provide the managers with written reports. Managers are exploring how they can use these better to further improve practice.

The staff receive regular supervision. Supervision records themselves are thorough. They offer clear instructions to staff about agreements and expectations. The home takes a firm approach to managing performance. There is clear evidence of constructive challenge to staff within supervision and probationary arrangements. This helps to ensure the quality of service that young people and their families receive from staff is consistently high and that managers guide staff in their professional development.

There are a range of training opportunities for staff. These are a combination of e-based learning and classroom style courses. Supervisions evidence that managers instruct staff to complete e-learning courses in advance of their next supervision. There are opportunities for staff to gain qualifications that relate to working with young people with autism.

Communication with families is regular. Families report being happy with the level of communication they receive. There have been no complaints from families, young people or professionals since the last inspection about the residential provision. The service has recently conducted a survey of families to better understand their thoughts and opinions on the quality of care provided.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	136047
Social care unique reference number	SC425708
DfE registration number	873/6048

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	8
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	5 to19
Headteacher	Ms Tina Harris
Head of Care	Ms Shelly Hayes
Date of previous boarding inspection	03/03/2015
Telephone number	01223 277438
Email address	info@grettonschool.com

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