

Fred Nicholson School

Westfield Road, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1JB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Fred Nicholson School is a day and maintained residential special school for pupils aged between seven and 16. The school currently has 20 children, who stay for between one and four nights each week. The residential provision is situated in the main school building and provides separate accommodation for boys and girls. The school caters for children who have moderate learning difficulties such as speech and language disorders, autism spectrum disorders and behavioural difficulties.

The residential provision was last inspected in October 2018.

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 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 **requires improvement to be 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: 8 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The residential provision is good. The children enjoy attending and they make progress because of the support that they receive.

The staff ensure that each child has an individual set of targets. The staff and managers monitor these and measure the children's progress. The staff focus on improving children's social, emotional and independence skills. One parent said, 'My child is becoming more independent in himself. Staying in residence is pushing his boundaries in a safe way. His confidence has increased.'

Children participate with enthusiasm in activities. These include events in the wider community, such as creative fundraising activities.

The staff help the children to improve their health and hygiene and to progress socially and emotionally. Consequently, the children improve their social skills, independence skills and their ability to manage their emotions.

The staff know the children well and have good relationships with them. The staff are positive about the children. They like them and care about them. This can be seen in the way that the staff write case records and the certificates that celebrate the children's achievements. These certificates are given to the children when they move on. These memorable records provide valuable memories of the children's residential experiences.

A clear and consistent process supports the children's transition into the residential provision. These transitions include family visits and the gathering and evaluation of relevant information prior to children's overnight stays. This helps to ensure that children are treated as individuals and given the help that they need.

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

Although there are some examples of good practice and effective safeguarding, there are areas that need to be better.

In most instances, potential safeguarding concerns are shared with safeguarding professionals quickly and effectively. However, on one occasion, this did not occur. Although this did not compromise the safety of the child, it had the potential to do so. Since this incident, a new reporting system has been implemented and the managers are confident that this will reduce the likelihood of further errors.

The designated safeguarding staff are up to date with their training. The designated safeguarding lead works with external professionals. She attends most safeguarding meetings. However, there is no contingency plan for an alternative member of staff

to attend if these occur during school holidays or if the designated safeguarding lead is unavailable. On one occasion, the designated safeguarding lead did not obtain the minutes of a safeguarding meeting that the school had not been able to attend. This led to a further meeting being missed. Therefore, the staff did not contribute to the review or modification of child protection plans, which could be detrimental to the child's welfare.

The children share concerns or worries with the staff. For some children, opening up about their feelings and worries is a specific goal that they are working towards. Developing these skills helps the children to receive the support that they need.

The children, their families and the staff unanimously said that bullying is not an issue. Interactions witnessed during the inspection were generally kind. The staff are quick to intervene when required. This helps the children to feel secure.

There are relatively few significant behavioural incidents. There have been two incidents that required physical intervention. These interventions have been short and proportionate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The management team, which has a strong knowledge of the children, is respected and valued by the experienced staff. The residential provision is led by an experienced and qualified manager.

The management team encourages the staff to develop their roles. The staff spoke with pride about their work and the positive effect that it has on the children. The staff were excited to show what they have been doing and to talk about where they think that they can further improve their practice.

The staff receive regular supervisions. The manager has received supervision and an appraisal since the last inspection. This is an improvement.

A system of peer challenge and review is being used in respect of external monitoring visits. This has the potential to drive improvement.

Feedback from the children's families was positive. Families value the residential provision and believe that it benefits their children, who, they said, enjoy attending.

There have been no complaints. However, the school's complaints procedure does not reflect what should happen if there is a complaint about the residential provision. Generally, the policies are written with the day school in mind. Consequently, these policies do not provide enough guidance for the staff or the families in respect of the residential provision.

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 standard for residential special schools:

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the school's policies give full consideration to the residential provision.

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: SC038284

Headteacher: Jane Hayman

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector

Ashley Hinson, social care inspector



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