

# 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 19 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 manager has been in post since April 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

The residential provision was last inspected in December 2019.

### **Inspection dates: 29 June to 1 July 2021**

**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:** 2 December 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Children enjoy good relationships with staff. Staff work effectively with external professionals to support children. Staff know the children well, care about them and are invested in them.

Children attend school well. Children and staff create targets linked to children's education, health and care plans. Children make good progress towards these targets. New recording systems have improved the communication between the residential staff and the school staff.

Staff listen to the children. They make time to sit and explore children's views and interests. Children are keen to share their thoughts and interests with staff. This contributes towards the strong relationships and sense of security that children feel in residence.

The range of activities available to children has, naturally, been affected by restrictions related to COVID-19. However, staff have responded proactively and have developed an in-house award scheme for children. This has been a very positive piece of work, resulting in good activities with motivated children. The headteacher gives out the reward certificates, which emphasises that this is an achievement and raises the profile of the residential provision.

A clear process for admission to residence is in place. The pace of admission is dictated by the children themselves. Staff ensure that they have the necessary information in place prior to a child coming to stay.

Staff support the children to develop skills and abilities that will help them once they leave residence. Children, their parents and external professionals recognise the progress that children make in this area.

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

Children feel safe. They are relaxed and comfortable with the staff. A social worker said about a child that she feels safe and happy in residence.

Staff are attentive and monitor children discreetly. This enables staff to pick up on indications that children are unsettled or unhappy in a sensitive and supportive way.

Safeguarding records are clear. The designated safeguarding lead has a clear understanding of the needs of the children in residence for whom there are safeguarding concerns.

A new system is in place to ensure that there is a named designated safeguarding lead or deputy available outside term time. This reduces the risk of safeguarding leads missing important meetings and failing to contribute to safeguarding plans.

When concerns arise, designated safeguarding leads make prompt contact with the designated officers from the local authority. This enables swift and effective action to safeguard children.

Children's behaviour in residence is good. Staff manage the excitement and exuberance of the children in a calm and controlled manner. Children listen to staff and respond appropriately when staff intervene. There have been no incidents of children going missing from the school or self-harming while in residence. Children said that bullying is not a problem in residence.

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

New management arrangements have been put in place since the last inspection. These changes have enabled an increased focus on safeguarding, while providing consistency and stability for the residential setting.

Staff said that COVID-19 restrictions presented challenges with staff sickness and isolation, affecting the number of staff available at times. However, staff consistently reported a sense of optimism about the direction that the residential setting is taking. They feel that things have stabilised and, more recently, improved.

Staff are well managed and well guided by the management team. School leaders are known to the staff and children. This helps staff to feel part of the whole school. It also means that staff are familiar with other senior staff outside their immediate line management who they could turn to if they had concerns.

Managers have a good understanding of children's needs. Staff receive regular supervisions and have been able to access a wide range of additional training opportunities.

Staff and managers work very well with families and professionals. Parents described staff as available and supportive. All external professionals spoken with were positive about the communication with the school. Social workers were very positive about the experiences that children have in residence.

Although children's views are sought by staff and managers, managers have not ensured that children have been able to participate in monitoring visits by an independent person. This means that the children's views were not included in these monitoring activities.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that visits linked to national minimum standard 20 provide children with the opportunity to meet with the independent visitor.

### **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:** Michael Roach

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector

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