

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy

Pettus Road, Norwich NR4 7BU

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Eaton Hall Specialist Academy caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. The school is a day and residential special school located in a residential area of Norwich. The residential accommodation is incorporated in the school in a separate purpose-built building in the school grounds.

There are 55 pupils on roll, 24 of whom board for up to four nights a week.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

The head of care has been in post since September 2014 and has a relevant qualification.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2022

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 4 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The residential provision adds great value to the children's school experience and ability to learn. The benefits for children using the residential provision are life changing. Children thrive in small classes and a positive residential environment that supports their learning. For many children, this has given them a belief that they can learn. Children who could not read or write, quickly begin to read for a purpose and write fluently with the support of the staff. Residential staff support children during the evening and the school day. This gives the staff a comprehensive understanding of the children's unique learning needs and abilities.

The children hugely enjoy a wide range of enriching activities that enhance their school day. The staff provide stimulating and interesting evening activities that encourage children's literacy and creativity and improve their well-being. Outdoor activities, such as kayaking and cycling, encourage children to develop their confidence and build new interests.

The accommodation is modern, light and clean with single rooms that children can personalise. Indoor spaces have been creatively adapted to provide areas for soft play, small-world play and indoor skating. These areas give children opportunities for team games and self-directed play. This has been particularly helpful when local leisure outlets have been closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The relationships between the staff and the children are warm and tactile. The staff act as excellent role models and treat children with dignity and respect. Staff are skilled and insightful in their interactions with children, minimising potentially difficult situations. Each child has three designated staff across the school. The staff have built extremely positive relationships with the children through shared and fun experiences.

Children are encouraged to develop a wide range of life skills that will help them in their adult lives. The staff support them to use public transport and make meals. This helps to build life skills in preparation for independence.

Planned therapeutic interventions help children to understand their past experiences. There is a considerable range of bespoke resources in designated areas that the children can use in the evening. This provides space for children to take time away from others and channel their emotions and energy positively.

The children enjoy a balanced range of healthy, freshly cooked food. They enjoy family style dining with staff and are supported to try different foods. Food is presented with flair and it is tasty and appealing. Children's diets improve. They confidently enjoy new foods and eat fruit and vegetables.

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

The staff minimise risks to children during residential time and while on outings and trips. Parents feel strongly assured that their children are safe and well supervised. Risk management and identifying risks for new children are good.

Safeguarding children's welfare is given high priority. The staff have clear and established designated safeguarding roles. The staff feel confident in how to report and record concerns. Staff are vigilant; concerns about children are reported quickly and shared with the relevant agencies. The staff work well with external professionals to escalate any emerging concerns and continually monitor children's well-being.

The children feel safe and relaxed in the residential areas. There are good social interactions as children form friendships. This is a significant change for some children who have found social interactions difficult. Although some children said that they do not always get on well in school, this does not carry over into residential time. The bespoke activity programme and high staffing levels provide a good structure. There are always ample options for different activity groups and this ensures that children can have space from one another.

The staff do not shy away from challenging children's behaviour when required. The staff consistently uphold the agreed rules. Staff show excellent consistency. They are measured and calm in their approach to managing difficult situations. Senior staff monitor behaviour management, including restraint, carefully. This identifies patterns and trends, which are reviewed to identify triggers or improve practice. The children are motivated to change behaviours that are not helpful to them. The children respond to and embrace the 'Earnie' reward system. This system encourages children to work towards privileges and gain trust and increased responsibility.

There have been a few occasions when children have left the school site. The majority of these instances have been very short and children remained in the sight of staff. One on occasion, a child left the school site and was collected by the police some distance away a considerable time later. Although the staff responded quickly in searching for the child and called the police, the response to this incident could have been better coordinated. Failing to follow the protocol delayed the reporting time in calling the police and potentially increased the time that the child was away.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential provision is managed by a highly experienced and long-established head of care who is qualified to level 5. A designated senior leadership team oversees the residential provision. Each member of the senior team has a comprehensive understanding of the children. The team members work extremely well with the staff to keep children's best interests at the centre of any decisions.

This helps to ensure a consistent approach to achieving children's goals, education targets and care plans.

The staff are positive, highly motivated and professional. The head of care organises staff training and induction well to ensure that staff are fully equipped for their roles. Staff learning and development are strongly encouraged. The staff are all supported to build their knowledge and skills and use this learning to develop their practice and enhance the residential provision. The leadership team fully supports staff's professional development and welcomes their expertise. The staff team brings a wide range of exciting activity plans and uses these to optimise children's experiences.

The senior leadership team has ambitious plans for growth. The team has supported the opening of a second school, providing placements for a wider catchment of children who previously had to travel. The experience and expertise of the senior leadership team are worthy of sharing and recognised in other schools.

The staff have enormous pride in their roles. There is a celebrated culture of team effort and positive practice. The staff team has worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff maintained contact with children and their families during lockdowns. This was a creative and energetic whole-school approach. The staff coordinated home visits and food parcels for families in need, maintaining important school links for children.

Staff say that they feel strongly supported and benefit from regular one-to-one supervisions with their line managers. However, there are two senior staff who have not had regular supervision. This is partly due to two outbreaks of COVID-19, during which a high number of staff were affected.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are clear about implementing the missing-from-school procedure, and ensure that the staff responses are coordinated and reflect the school's protocol.
- The registered person should ensure that all staff have regular supervision.

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: SC038324

Headteacher: Keith Bates

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Inspector

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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