

Greenbank Residential School

Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1LD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Greenbank Residential School is a local authority-maintained school for the education of children and young people aged 11 to 18 years of age who have moderate or severe learning difficulties and/or language and/or communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorder.

The residential provision provides care, support and educational opportunities for 56 young people. A maximum of 18 students can stay each night. There is also the capacity for students to have an extended day and to return home to sleep. Each young person has an individual educational residential package for one or two nights during term time. This does not include weekends or holidays.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 October 2017

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 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Young people, parents and other professionals say that this is an excellent service where young people thrive.
- Young people can reflect on the support that they have received to make progress. One young person sent an email to his father saying, 'I did it. I finally got the hoop from the bottom of the pool.'
- Young people enjoy spending time with their friends. They have strong relationships with members of staff and talk openly about their feelings or concerns. Young people and parents said that they feel valued because their opinions matter and that they are listened to.
- The residential setting links closely with the school. As a result, some activities are incorporated to enhance learning, improve motor skills and to reduce risk.
- Young people's voices are clearly heard and they influence the development of the service.
- Safeguarding practice is good and additional security has been implemented around access to sensitive information.
- A stable staff team cares for young people. Staff have regular and effective training. The consistency of the staff team and the knowledge it gains through training helps to support young people well.
- Leaders and managers are well qualified and experienced. They are committed to continuous improvement in young people's experiences and opportunities during their residential stay.
- The head of care works in partnership with a range of professionals. She leads with a strong commitment and passion and has good oversight of all areas of practice.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Records are not clear because they include a number of partial dates. For example, some records do not have the year of the record. This means that there is difficulty in knowing whether this is new or old information.
- Young people can share bedrooms. However, the head of care has not looked at whether there are any known or perceived risks in doing so.
- Most of the young people's risk assessments are generic and cover a range of issues from using kitchen appliances through to road safety. However, some young people are described as complex and one young person has nocturnal epilepsy. It is unclear how these needs are assessed to guide staff practice.
- Young people's records do not show the individuality of the young person. For example, when young people undertake a task related to their independence, the record is written up as a group task rather than reflecting the individual progress

of young people.

- The monitoring reports undertaken by the governors and the independent visitor do not offer a clear evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to young people. In addition to this, the head of care's monitoring does not always identify the action taken to address shortfalls, patterns or trends.

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

Recommendations

- Enhance the monitoring of records outlined in Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards 2015 and include the action taken to address any shortfalls, patterns or trends.
- Enhance the arrangements for young people to share a bedroom. In particular, that consideration is given to any known or perceived risks.
- Further improve young people's risk assessments to ensure that they are sufficiently detailed to address individual risks and that they highlight any risk-reduction strategies.
- Enhance the recording within care plans to demonstrate that young people's needs are identified and addressed. This also includes ensuring that there is a good link to additional information that would demonstrate progress.
- Enhance performance records of supervision. In addition to this, ensure that supervisors undertake training relevant to this role.
- Enhance further the monitoring by the governors and independent visitors to ensure that they evaluate the effectiveness of the care provided and whether children are safeguarded.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people say that they enjoy staying here. They were extremely complimentary about the staff team and the care that they receive. One young person said, 'I love being here. It is hard because, after my stay, I know I have to wait another week.' A parent said, 'He packs his bag ready to go. This is massive for him as he will not stay anywhere else.'

Young people attend the school at year 7 and they are offered a residential placement when they are in year 8. This period allows the teachers to understand the young person, their individual needs, and assists in informing the residential service of any concerns or care needs that are required. Parents receive a leaflet about what the residential provision provides and they have opportunities to attend meetings to discuss their interest in the service. Young people visit the provision, stay for tea and join in an activity prior to having an overnight stay. Careful consideration is given to their friendship groups in school and, when possible, matching these groups during overnight stays. This means that some young people are able to share bedrooms with their friends. However, the head of care cannot demonstrate that they have looked at any known or perceived risks that may affect young people sharing a bedroom. In addition, there is not a strategy in place if young people fall out or an incident was to occur. For example, whether there is a spare bedroom for a young person to stay in should these instances occur.

Young people said that they have excellent relationships with members of staff. They said that members of staff took an interest in their home life, how they were getting on in school, and how they were in general. There have been no complaints. Young people were confident that members of staff would listen to them, act on any concern that they may have and that staff would protect them. The residential provision displays several independent services contact numbers around the buildings that young people can contact. In addition to this, the independent visitor and numerous counsellors spend time with young people as part of their monitoring visits. As a result, young people told the inspectors that they had several independent people that they could talk to, if they wished.

There are a range of records that show how young people are cared for and how their needs are met by the provision. However, this information is located in several places. For example, some information on how young people have progressed in the residential provision is kept in the young person's school file, some information is recorded on the computer system, and some information is kept in a residential file. Members of staff were very knowledgeable about the young people that they cared for, but this knowledge is not always reflected in the young people's information. For example, young people are often taken out in a group to complete targets set out for their independence training. However, the record of the visit is written as a group and not what each individual young person accomplished. Therefore, it is difficult to see the progress that young people are making. In addition, some young people's records are not clear because dates or parts of dates are missing, for example the

year of the record. As a result, the reader does not know whether this is old or new information. This does not help young people understand the timelines of their journey throughout the residential provision.

Young people have excellent attendance at school. They are learning and making progress. The residential provision links closely with the school and activities are often chosen to enhance their learning or skills. For example, young people enjoy playing golf. This helps with their eye-to-hand co-ordination. Some young people complete stages of their AQA modules in residential time, such as using cooking appliances safely. This means that young people's education is supported well.

A representative from each of the residential apartments attends the residential council meeting. These meetings are held regularly. Young people said that this gives them an opportunity to discuss any ideas, make suggestions and plan activities. The young people invite other professionals and adults to these meetings. For example, one young person would like some Jamaican food served at mealtimes. A member of the catering staff is attending the next meeting to discuss ideas and recipes. This shows that young people have the opportunity to influence and develop the service provided to them.

Young people's health needs are met well. Young people bring in their medication daily or leave a supply at the setting. Medication is efficiently recorded, stored and is administered by two members of staff. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their medication. For example, young people help staff check that the medication is correctly labelled, that the dosage is right and that it has the correct name. As a result, young people know and often request their medication at the right time. This builds on their independence skills. Members of staff receive good training about medical conditions and associated illness. For example, they have received training in peanut allergies, asthma and epilepsy. There are good plans for any emergency and members of staff are qualified in first aid. The school nurse provides information and sessions on sexual health, immunisations and keeping safe. The school nurse is currently creating a group where young people can talk about puberty. This is to promote open relationships within a safe environment. In addition, the school nurse has a fortnightly drop-in session for young people. Young people can speak with her on any issue privately. One young person was concerned about their weight. They completed sessions on healthy eating, portion control and the types of food to eat less or more of. This shows that there is an all-round approach to young people's health, and good advice and support ensures young people's well-being.

The young people have been involved in several projects at the residential provision. Members of staff have raised funds, completed charity events, or raised awareness with external companies to improve the decoration and environment for young people. One company has provided a sensory garden for the young people. Another company has painted sections of the apartments using their knowledge about colours that enhance well-being. The young people said that they enjoyed being involved and that they were able to express their ideas. The young people have put together a 'thank you' card for each company with a photograph of them enjoying their

surroundings. Further to this, young people display artwork, photographs and pictures in the main lounges of their apartments. This shows the young people's individuality, their confidence, and gives them a sense of belonging.

Young people engage in a range of activities that include their personal preferences, such as designing things on a computer, spending time playing on a console or reading. They complete activities in the community, such as going to the pictures, golfing, horse riding or bowling. They can also use the school's gym and swimming pool. Some activities are linked to their education or to improve independence skills. For example, shopping trips are linked to travelling by public transport, social skills, mathematics, looking at cheaper options for food items, or buying items to make things on their return to the provision. These elements are often linked to an AQA accreditation certificate. This means that young people are learning a range of skills.

The care and support that young people receive assists them to have a positive self-view, increases their emotional resilience and helps them build and maintain positive relationships. Young people are treated with dignity and respect. Members of staff ensure that young people are able to follow their beliefs, faiths and culture. This allows young people to grow and mature as individuals. A parent said, 'She has grown in confidence and self-esteem and is able to engage in social situations in a relaxed way. This is down to members of staff encouraging, supporting and intuitively knowing her.'

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

Young people say that they are very safe at this residential provision. One young person said, 'I did not know about all the pitfalls when being on the internet, about things that could trap you into different things.' He continued to say, 'We have completed a project on this and I now know that I should not share information with strangers because they could use it against me.' A parent said, 'I feel as comfortable with the arrangements there as I am at home.' Another parent said, 'It is a safe environment that gives her the ability to express herself.'

There are several safeguarding policies, procedures and systems that work together to keep young people safe. This includes several appointed people who take a lead to ensure that young people are safe. The safeguarding governor said, 'I am a critical friend to the school.' She said that she completes termly safeguarding audits that include looking at records, the monitoring of incidents and the action taken about all concerns. The safeguarding management team meets to discuss any improvements. As result of this, the team incorporated a safety system on the computer. This means that only safeguarding leads have access to sensitive information that supports confidentiality. The safeguarding governor also delivers training on associated safeguarding risks such as radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and e-safety. As a result, members of staff confidently discussed their role, responsibilities and the action they would take if any incident was to occur, or if they had a concern.

The residential provision has recently identified a family support advisor. The safeguarding governor said, 'This is one of the most beneficial things that we have

done. This has closed the gap between parents, the school and us. It adds an extra layer of safeguarding for all young people.' There have been other good initiatives introduced, such as a pictorial safeguarding policy. The safeguarding team also wants to improve some documents to make them more child friendly. The team has set up a training day for staff to help young people to contribute to this. These developments show that the service is trying to capture the voice and understanding of the young people, to enable them to raise concerns and to understand how to keep themselves safe.

Young people said that bullying was not an issue for them. Young people talked about a project that they have completed about bullying. One of the young people said, 'I now know that calling someone a name or not letting them join in something can be bullying.' Another young person said, 'We all get on well together. If we do not like something, we walk away or tell a member of staff.' There was a confident agreement from young people that members of staff would challenge and take action if they saw or were told of any incident. This helps young people with their social skills, to maintain relationships and to have the confidence to report any incident.

Young people have not gone missing from residence. Members of staff are aware that there is potential for this to happen. They have a clear understanding of the process to take, if an incident was to occur.

Young people's risk assessments are mainly generic. They cover using kitchen appliances safely and road safety. However, some young people are described as complex and some young people have displayed aggressive behaviour towards members of staff. There is little information around how these risks are managed, or that members of staff are using agreed strategies to de-escalate this behaviour. In addition, one young person has nocturnal epilepsy. His parents have informed the service that he shouts and kicks out prior to a seizure. This is not recorded in his main care plan. A waking night member of staff periodically checks him throughout the night; however, no recordings are made of these checks. This does not ensure that there are good systems in place to safeguard young people fully. In contrast to this, members of staff are skilled at identifying when young people are becoming distressed or anxious. Therefore, they initiate strategies to divert young people. For example, an inspector observed an activity where the young people were playing a game. A member of staff noticed that a young person was wringing his hands. The member of staff made eye contact with the other member of staff who was leading the activity and who instinctively knew that this was because the young person was last to have his turn. The young person's turn was brought forward and he settled back into the game. This shows that members of staff intuitively know and respond quickly to lessen young people's anxieties.

There has been one occasion when a young person was held for his safety. The incident was reviewed, recorded and followed the strict guidelines of the legislative framework. The young person was asked his views around the event, so members of staff could learn from him, for example what they could have done differently to prevent the incident occurring. As this incident happened on a community activity, the young person was not allowed to go on the next activity. As a restorative

consequence, he spent time with the headteacher looking at ways to express himself appropriately. This means that young people are given the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour.

The inspectors observed young people caring for each other. One young person patted a young person's arm when they became upset. Another young person stroked a young person's back when they were coughing. Another young person helped a young person with their dishes at tea time. This shows that young people have empathy towards each other, have strong relationships, and that they make appropriate gestures to show concern.

There have been no new members of staff since the provision was last inspected. At the last inspection, the recruitment and vetting procedures were generally found to be good. A point for improvement was made around checking the previous employment of new staff and the reason for leaving their past job. The head of care was confident that this would be done with any new staff as they were following the guidance on safer recruitment. This will ensure that young people are safeguarded from unsuitable adults. All visitors to the residence are required to sign in, show identification and are supervised while in the setting. This further protects young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A highly committed and dedicated head of care has led the residential provision for over five years. She is suitably trained and experienced. She works in close partnership with the headteacher to continue to develop and improve the residential provision. For example, at the moment young people have their tea in the main school hall. A new kitchen is being installed in a separate building. This will create a more homely and functional environment for young people.

The head of care is well respected by her colleagues, parents and professionals. They all commented positively on her knowledge and professionalism. She knows the young people well and promotes close working partnerships with families in order to provide the best possible care. As a result, young people are thriving and are learning to be as independent as possible. A parent said, 'We could not ask for anything better. [Head of care name] is very approachable, informative and I am confident that I could speak with her at any time.'

The head of care monitors the quality of the service and the care provided to young people. She collates feedback from staff, parents, young people and other professionals to inform service development. For example, young people requested a pictorial leaflet to show what had been discussed at the council meetings. Other young people wanted the council meeting to be held on different days so that it could be accessible to all. These changes have been made. This shows that good action is taken, so that young people are involved in the development of the service. The head of care completes a self-assessment on the service provided. In general, it is a good document for demonstrating how the service is monitored, what improvements have been made and what requires further development. However,

the head of care agreed that there were some weaknesses in dating paperwork, risk assessments and triangulating information to show the progress of the young people. This has not impacted on the care that young people receive, but has the potential to do so.

The governing body is heavily involved in the school and has a visible presence. There are 12 governors, including a local authority representative, a community governor and three parents. They meet formally three times a year and informally three times a year. There are three separate chairs that cover the school curriculum, finance and residential setting. Each governor takes it in turn to monitor the residential service. Their findings have brought about improvements in training for governors, e-safety across the whole complex, and ensuring that staff print their name, as well as signing, on documents. A new development for next term is that governors will be looking at six specific topics as part of their monitoring, such as health, activities and homework. The head governor said that this will help them to focus and improve on these areas. Presently, the governors' monitoring reports do not give an opinion on the effectiveness of the care provided and whether young people are safeguarded. However, governors are fully aware of the value of the residence and the positive impact that this has on all aspects of young people's lives. They are confident to challenge the head of care and are kept informed of any changes to the residential provision. A governor said, 'The residence and after-school activities are highly valued and are an integral part of school life. They offer opportunities that young people may not otherwise experience.'

An independent visitor externally monitors the service. He regularly consults with young people and he has attended social events such as the summer barbeque. This gave him an opportunity to speak with a range of people, including parents. The independent visitor was able to observe the interactions between parents, staff, young people and other professionals and draw positive comments from these. However, the report does not give an opinion on the effectiveness of the care provided and whether children are safeguarded. As a result, there is no independent view recorded on these matters.

The statement of principles and practice is kept under review and clearly sets out the ethos and objectives of the service. It shows that the staff team has high expectations and aspirations for young people and this is demonstrated in practice. In addition to this, the head of care and staff work closely with a range of external professionals to develop the service and improve young people's lives. For example, they share good practice with other schools and they are also working closely with the police on a domestic violence initiative. As a result, they build effective relationships within the community.

Members of staff said that they valued the support that they received from the senior staff and the head of care. Staff described them as approachable, accessible and fair. Staff said that they regularly consult with each other through handovers, team meetings and supervision on matters of service and strategies to care for young people well. However, members of staff do not receive supervision from qualified supervisors. This is reflected in the brief recordings of the meetings. The head of

care has identified this as an area for improvement and training has been scheduled to address this.

There have been no new appointments of staff. Young people are cared for by a stable staff team. This means that young people receive consistency of care. The staff team is undergoing changes due to budget reductions. Some staff have been given the opportunity to be trained as teaching assistants and to work in the school in the near future. Other staff do not know what the future holds for them. However, they remain positive and continue to give a high level of care to young people.

The residential setting was rated outstanding at the previous inspection. Leaders and managers have maintained good standards and continue to develop the service. They have taken on the points of improvements made at the last inspection to improve practice. Computerised documents now show the identity of any third party. Some improvements have been made in recording dates on care plans, but further improvement is needed to ensure that all documents are dated.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC006624

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Michael McCann

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01606 288028

Email address: head@greenbank.cheshire.sch.uk

Inspectors

Pam Nuckley, social care inspector (lead)
Chris Scully, social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
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M1 2WD

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