

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 aged 11 to 18 with moderate or severe learning difficulties and/or language and/or communication difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, the residential provision provides care, support and educational opportunities for 34 children.

Each child has an individual residential package for one night each week during term time. Some children stay only for the evening to extend their opportunities to socialise and learn independence skills.

The head of care was appointed in November 2023 and has the appropriate experience and qualifications for this role.

Inspection dates: 27, 28 and 29 February 2024

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: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and enjoy staying in the residential provision. They have established positive relationships with the staff who care for them. The children make progress with their independence, social and communication skills, through a variety of educational experiences that are delivered by a skilful staff team.

Most parents speak positively about the impact the residential provision has had on their children. For some families, the children's progress is having a positive impact in the family home. One parent said, '[Name of Child] is more confident. It has helped them socially and they have developed friendships. They can now do things they couldn't do before.'

Children enjoy going to school. They are well prepared for their school day and evening routine because of the seamless transitions facilitated between the school and residential staff. The children's residential targets are linked to their education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Over time, the staff help the children to develop their skills and meet these targets, revisiting areas that require more support when needed.

The calm and relaxing atmosphere provides children with an emotionally safe environment to develop their confidence to take part in the programme. The children become knowledgeable about one another's interests. Children are taught how to compromise and how to share and are kind to one another.

Children say that they feel listened to. Various forums such as the residential council meetings, and the day-to-day conversations staff have with the children, capture the children's views and opinions. This gives children a sense of agency about their experiences when staying in the residential provision.

Staff patiently deliver inclusive independence sessions. Diligent planning ensures that sessions are meaningful and enjoyable for the children. These sessions occur at the residential provision and in the community. Activities and learning sessions are fun, for example going to a youth club to socialise, and going to the shop to buy cooking ingredients while using the local transport links. The mix of activities and opportunities to socialise with other children outside of residence helps children to develop their skills in unfamiliar surroundings.

Staff observe children in the classroom to help the team prepare to welcome new children into the residential provision. Key workers collate important information on the children's needs. This is then cascaded to the wider staff team. This thoughtful planning helps children to sensitively adjust to staying away from the family home for the first time.

Staff work in partnership with other agencies such as the speech and language team and the school nurse. The intervention and support from these specialist services guides the staff in their work with the children. The school's family liaison officer provides a vital source of support to the children's families. The family liaison officer makes significant efforts to forge trusting relationships with parents, who value the support and guidance available to them. One parent said, 'We have monthly meetings, and I can phone [Name of family liaison officer] at any time.'

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

The children feel safe in the residential provision. Children told the inspectors, 'The staff care about us' and, 'I feel safe here'. The trusting relationships the children have with the staff underpin their sense of safety.

Children are safer because everyone has the information, they need to uphold their safeguarding responsibilities. School and residential staff come together twice a day to share important information about the children. This ensures that all those directly involved with the children can appropriately respond to any emerging needs or concerns. Weekly safeguarding meetings between the school and residential leadership teams and the designated safeguarding lead promote a strongly coordinated safeguarding team.

The children's behaviour plans and risk management plans are used across the whole school and residential provision to further enhance the collaborative approach the children experience.

There are no serious concerns of bullying and children say that they feel safe. When concerns about the children's understanding of consent and appropriate touch arise, work is done to help the children reflect about the potential consequences of their actions. The support from the local police officer adds strength to the intervention and preventative work.

Staff have reflective conversations with children to help them consider their behaviour. A new reflective script promotes consistency of these conversations across the whole school. Staff's persistence with one child is helping the child to recognise the impact of their actions on others.

The effective use of the school's integrated safeguarding information system promotes a constant flow of information between all departments. The children's voice features strongly in the staff's recordings on the system to demonstrate a culture of child-focused decision-making.

A forensic audit by an external professional has further strengthened the school's safeguarding processes and systems. This illustrates the school's commitment to upholding its safeguarding responsibilities to the children and their families.

No new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. However, an organised recruitment and information system offers reassurance to the regulator that safer recruitment practices are in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The new head of care is suitably qualified and experienced for the role. A collaborative working relationship with the deputy helps to guide the team to hold the children's needs at the forefront of their practice. The team's committed approach enables the children to have positive experiences and make progress.

All staff are established in their roles and are committed members of the team. Despite some uncertainty around their long-term future, staff remain focused and committed to providing children with the best care. They are fully invested in the residential provision and take pride in their work. Staff said that the progress made since the last inspection has helped them to feel reconnected with the school.

Staff have the support and training they need to be effective in their roles. Team meetings and practice-related supervisions give staff a forum for reflection to help them meet the children's needs. Observations of staff practice provide them with critical feedback about their performance. This helps to maintain staff's insight and gives them reassurance that their practice aligns with the school's ethos of enhancing the children's independence.

Handover routines are embedded in practice and staff understand their roles and responsibilities around the care of the children each day. These routines and established lines of communication connect the day and night staff in the residential provision. This ensures that children experience consistent levels of care.

The independent visitor attends the residential provision to scrutinise and evaluate whether the children are safe, and their needs are being met. The governors record their response on the independent visitor reports, as required by the national minimum standards. The children's voice is heard throughout the reports and signifies that these visits are child focused. The quality of the reports gives the school leaders and the governors an impartial overview about the effectiveness of staff in helping the children to make progress.

Governors take pride in their role and are invested in the residential service. They have had training and help to develop their knowledge about the residential provision and the role of the governors. They have an inquisitive interest during their visits to the residential provision. This helps them to be reassured that the children are safe and have opportunities to make individual progress.

The residential accommodation is generally well maintained. However, environmental checks do not always identify small areas of damage and items that have age-related signs of wear and tear.

The head of care and the staff have a clear understanding of the progress children are making. However, on occasions, they have not contributed an accurate account of a child's progress when the child's EHC plan has been reviewed. Also, their analysis about the children's progress is not always visible in the children's records.

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

Points for improvement

- Leaders and managers should ensure that their contribution to a child's education, health and care plan (EHCP plan) reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Leaders and managers should ensure that the children's records describe their analysis about the children's progress. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards, page 12, paragraph 7.2)
- Leaders and managers should ensure that environmental checks of the apartments thoroughly scrutinise all aspects of the living space to make sure that shortfalls are identified and rectified without delay. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards, page 13, paragraph 9.1)

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: SC006624

Headteacher: Michael McCann

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

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