

# 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. There are currently 121 children on role.

At the time of the inspection, the residential provision provides care, support and educational opportunities for up to 30 children.

24 children were accessing the service at the time of the inspection. Each child has an individual residential package for one night each week during term time.

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

### Inspection dates: 11, 12 and 13 February 2025

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

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

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:** 27 February 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

The residential provision has a profound impact on the lives of children. Children make exceptional progress because of the actions of staff working with them in the residential provision and their experiences while staying there. Staff communicate regularly with children's families, welcoming their feedback to improve the service through consultations and annual surveys. Children's families are extremely complimentary about the impact of their children accessing the provision. One parent said, 'The residential provision is outstanding, offering a safe and enriching space that fosters independence and personal growth.'

Children speak highly about their residential experience. They make strong and supportive friendships with one another. They are supported to understand the importance of respectful relationships and spending positive time together. Staff are confident and competent in their knowledge of each child. Staff provide a nurturing place for children to stay and to flourish. It is because of this approach that children develop trusting relationships with the staff team.

There is an excellent level of preparation by staff to ensure that children have positive introductions to their residential stays, to help them to adjust and to settle. Residential staff visit children in school to start to build relationships, and families are invited to fun annual events. In addition, year 9 students are given a short-term block of residential stays to help prepare them for the year ahead. These preparatory stays provide reassurance to families, so that they feel confident with their children accessing the provision. One child scored staff 'ten out of ten' for how they helped them to settle into the residential provision.

There is an abundance of work that captures the development of children's independence skills and underpins the curriculum. This is a key strength of the residential provision. Routine planners are detailed and meticulous to each child. Targeted work to address each child's individual needs is pitched at their level of understanding. There are clear objectives for each child and activity-based work is completed with them.

Children's health and educational needs are prioritised within the residential curriculum. Evidence of children's progress against their termly targets is captured and shared as part of their annual reviews and termly progress reports are provided by the residential staff team. The education and residential staff work exceptionally well together to ensure that communication is consistently shared and that there is a smooth daily transition of children moving between school and the residential provision.

Prioritising children's views, wishes and feelings is central to everything the staff team do. Children attend termly residential council meetings to share their views and

they are part of the school council, where they advocate on behalf of each other. Children complete annual well-being questionnaires and talk to the independent person about their residential experiences. An independent person provides an additional opportunity for children to speak to someone external to the school. Therefore, children have many forums for their voice to be heard and this empowers them in shaping their residential experiences.

The independent person's reports are of excellent quality and support the development of the residential provision. The head of care ensures that any recommendations are acted upon quickly. Some changes to the residential provision have included the refurbishment of one of the residential apartment blocks and a planned schedule of work to ensure that the high standard of accommodation is across the whole provision.

During their stays in residential, children engage in a wide range of fun activities both inside and outside the provision. This makes an exceptional difference to their lives and varies their life experiences. Photo albums capture children's memories and enjoyable times together. Children are actively involved in fund raising and they have lots of opportunities to take part in themed events such as Chinese New Year and Thanksgiving which supports their learning about different cultures and customs.

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

Safeguarding practice is highly effective. Children have a strong sense of safety and well-being in the residential provision. Staff have an excellent understanding of children's needs, vulnerabilities and the potential risks they may be exposed to.

Risk assessments provide staff with clear guidance and individualised strategies to manage risks. This ensures that children are supported by staff who understand how to keep them safe. The residential team have demonstrated positive practice-sharing by supporting the implementation of their risk management processes across the wider school.

Children learn strategies to help them to manage how to react to the world around them. When required, children have a clear behaviour plan in place that helps to support them in times of crisis. Reward systems are used to encourage and support positive behaviour. Staff also undertake work with children around zones of regulation. This helps to equip them with the tools they require to manage their own emotions and devise their own coping strategies.

There is a highly effective system in place for reporting and monitoring any safeguarding concerns. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe from harm. Children do not go missing from the residential provision. They are supported to develop their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, through a range of focused and well-planned direct work. This includes areas such as stranger danger, road safety, bullying, personal space and healthy relationships.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has up to date training and provides continuous safeguarding support to the residential provision. The DSL and family liaison officer work closely with a wide range of agencies, such as the police and the **Social Care Institute for Excellence**, to ensure that concerns are responded to appropriately and promptly. Complaints are rare. They are responded to, treated seriously and investigated thoroughly.

The safeguarding governor has thorough oversight of any concerns in the residential provision. She meets half-termly with the DSL and the head of care. Her safeguarding audit and an external consultant's audit supports the rigorous approach to ensuring that children's safety and protection is prioritised in the residential provision.

Staff benefit from regular comprehensive safeguarding training. They also access a series of safeguarding question and answer sessions within team meetings to help them understand the risks posed to children, for example internet safety. The head of care has recently completed the Operation Encompass training in relation to domestic abuse and has ensured this has been disseminated to her staff team. The effective approach to articulating safeguarding knowledge within the team, ensures that all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage a wide range of safeguarding issues.

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

The head of care and deputy head of care work well together. They have high aspirations for children and a shared ambitious vision for the residential provision. They are innovative and excellent role models for both children and staff. They are focused on progression to support children into adulthood, by driving achievements, goals and permanence for children's futures. The head of care attends governors' meetings to ensure that the board are kept up to date on the overall operation and monitoring of the provision.

A detailed residential development plan and self-assessment toolkit demonstrates progression of the residential provision over a sustained period. Leaders and managers recognise the strengths of the residential provision and talk transparently about the areas that they are focused on developing. They collaborate with other residential schools to share exceptional practice and to influence positive changes to children's residential experiences. Effective monitoring systems enables the head of care to track children's progress and to assess the quality of the curriculum work that staff are completing with children.

Staff receive highly effective support to develop their practice and skills, and to monitor their well-being. Staff feel valued and recognise the high expectations that are placed on them in their work with children. Their views and feedback have been used to drive changes in the operation of the residential provision. Appraisal targets support staff's continuous professional development. The targets are also aspirational

for children in the residential provision, such to providing opportunities for children to experience employment.

There is a stable, experienced and fully qualified staff team to support children in the residential provision. In addition to a wide range of training, staff receive briefings through monthly online podcasts through The National College and they access the Autism Education Trust to give them a broader knowledge and understanding of children's needs. Children are helped by staff who have the knowledge and skills to support them.

Research informed practice is explored and discussed at team meetings, to ensure that there is a strong and confident practice base within the staff team. Research is led by any known risks to children and to help develop children's understanding of routines and independence skills. This initiative-taking practice has made a positive difference to children's experiences and progress.

The residential provision is prioritised at every governor's meetings, where feedback from the independent person and the head of care's reports are routinely discussed. There is also a high presence of governors in the residential provision. Alongside a dedicated residential governor, a member of the governing body regularly visits the residential provision to ensure that there are the highest standards of care for children. They individually report on their findings from their visits, which provides an extra layer of scrutiny of the residential provision. The residential governor is enthusiastic about the impact that the residential provision has on supporting families and changing children's lives. She regularly attends planned activities and celebrations to spend time with children and the staff team.

## **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**

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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