

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 44 young people. There is also the capacity for students to have an extended day and to return home to sleep. Each young person has an individual residential package for one night each week during term time. This does not include weekends or holidays.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 February 2020

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 18 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people's experiences and the overall progress that they make are very good. Staff know the young people very well and care about their happiness and safety. Each young person stays for one night each week. Staff pack this one night with enjoyable activities. Staff use a range of methods to consult with young people. Staff respond to young people's wishes, tailoring the best possible experience for them.

Young people make and develop friendships. They try new experiences such as a new food or a new skill. They learn about the fundamentals of independent living. This includes money recognition, shopping, personal care and road safety. They enjoy novelty in experiences such as their first pantomime or a youth club visit. Staff are skilful in blending group activity with one-to-one support and time alone. They recognise when young people need extra support to take part in activities and discussions. Staff find ways of helping young people to contribute to their sense of happiness. This helps young people to engage with the programme on offer. As a result, young people thrive and blossom into active, confident and skilled members of society.

Young people's voices were unanimous during the inspection. With eyes sparkling from vigorous games of puck hockey and tag, they told the inspector, 'I really enjoyed that!' 'I love being with my friends!' 'Our team won!'. They described the best things about 'resi'. They included activities, friends, cooking tea and e-safety while being online. Staff skilfully wrap up young people's learning into having fun. Staff use motivating activity to teach young people about empathy, turn-taking and listening to instructions. One young person said, 'When I am at home, I just spend time in my room on my games. Here, I get to do things with my friends, and learn how to look after myself.'

Young people discussed politics and environmental issues with the inspector. They showed a keen and knowledgeable interest in the wider world. Staff extend young people's understanding of and tolerance to others. Staff use discussion and constructive challenge to explore young people's views. This approach to citizenship underpins the solid progress that young people are making.

Staff do not consistently match their language to young people's understanding. This may limit some young people from achieving their full potential.

Parents say that their child's progress is amazing. They gave many examples of how school has increased flexibility, sociability and independence. One parent said, 'The residential has been crucial to our child's development. Most importantly, supporting him to make the right friendships.' Parents say that staff listen to them and involve them in planning. This reassures parents and builds trust and confidence in the service.

Staff escalate concerns about young people to senior staff. Although rare, when parents have concerns about the quality of care senior staff respond effectively.

Actions focus on protecting young people and securing their safety. The school works well with external professionals to meet young people's identified needs. The head acts promptly to work with parents to minimise any time lost from education when young people feel unable to attend school. Residential staff also work hard to reduce young people's anxiety about their overnight stays. This helps more young people to experience the opportunity of increasing their independence.

Staff prepare well for young people to join the residential provision. Planning is highly effective, considering individual needs and wishes. Staff are flexible. Young people can stay on the same night that their friends stay. Young people remain in charge of their experience. They get the support that they need to express how they feel about their experience. Young people speak for themselves in their settling-in and annual review meetings. They use video recordings if they do not attend in person. Young people value the opportunity that they have, the friendships they make, and the kindness of staff. Their voice and opinions are front and centre of residential life. Staff value and act on the young people's contributions.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Residential staff understand the importance of building positive relationships with young people. It is a foundation for safe and caring practice. Young people respond positively to staff. This means that staff rarely use restrictive practice. Staff pre-empt and soothe troubled situations. Young people seek help from staff when they feel confused, anxious or upset. This maintains a happy and calm atmosphere in the residential provision. It ensures that young people get the best help at the right time.

Many parents and young people told inspectors that staying at school is the only time they spend time away from their family. Staff help young people to find strategies and routines that anchor them in a world that, to them, is unpredictable and scary. This increases young people's confidence and sense of well-being. It helps them to become safe explorers of their widening boundaries. Staff encourage young people to learn about healthy relationships. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of friendship and tolerance. Young people learn about the pleasures and risks in meeting and making new friends. Staff plan trips to the local community. Young people visit youth clubs and football training. This is invaluable for helping young people to navigate independent living more safely.

Staff know young people's vulnerabilities very well, and generally have good strategies in place to minimise risk. Staff communicate concerns about young people effectively within the school community. This ensures that staff know about any matter that may affect young people's safety or welfare.

Some individual risk assessments are not up to date. They do not have clear strategies to address recognised potential risk. This includes how to help young people recognise when a friendship becomes more intimate. This limits the opportunities for clear and consistent care practice to keep young people safe. Staff work well with external mental health and safeguarding professionals. They use

advice to help young people with the knowledge and support that they need to improve their safety and well-being, and the safety of others.

Leaders and managers respond promptly to any safeguarding concerns. They focus on young people's immediate safety and well-being. They ensure that there are strong plans in place to provide young people with protection and support. Leaders and managers work well with parents, professionals and young people to explore how and why safeguarding concerns arise. They act to minimise harm. The safeguarding policy is not up to date. It lacks detail relevant to current guidance and government requirements. This may cause delay in reporting some safeguarding concerns within appropriate timescales.

Governors have adopted a new approach to their regular visits to monitor the residential provision. They always speak to young people and explore the quality of care. They do this through observation of staff practice and examination of records. Governors' detailed reports and recommendations are thoughtfully considered at governor meetings. This child-focused approach promotes young people's safety and welfare.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers share a common, ambitious vision. This vision underpins the significant progress that young people make. All staff want young people to achieve to their best potential. The residential provision is a key partner in driving this forward. The whole school works successfully towards clear objectives. These include offering young people the chance to enhance their education, independent and functional skills.

Leaders and managers promote collaborative working. Staff focus on identifying and addressing children's needs. For example, staff take much care to help young people to access and enjoy an overnight stay. Residential staff spend time in class and with families. They understand individual needs and wishes. They merge care planning outcomes with strategies that are already in place. Staffing levels support young people to enjoy group and individual activity. What young people think about their experience in residential matters to staff. Governors, the headteacher, the head of care and senior staff all make time to spend with young people. They understand that young people are unique.

Leaders ensure that there is regular liaison and reporting between school departments. They share young people's progress. The residential team helps young people to work on accredited units of work that reinforce parts of the school curriculum. This helps young people to make very good progress.

Leaders and managers have supported residential staff through two workforce consultations. Changes include changes to roles and budgetary constraints. This has put pressure on staff. Staff remain committed to providing young people with the best possible experiences. Informal support and discussion ensure that there is a continuing good level of care provided. Formal supervision of residential senior staff is inconsistent. The residential self-assessment and development plans omit identified

steps to drive systematic improvement. This has led to the minor shortfalls identified in this inspection.

Due to staffing constraints, reflective practice is hindered by a reduction in activity analysis. Leaders have not evaluated innovative practice for effectiveness. This includes group and individual relationship and emotional well-being work. Residential staff take part in training. For example, they have learned how to promote positive values in equality and diversity. Training in autistic spectrum disorder and up-to-date safeguarding guidance is patchy. Leadership has not updated the school's safeguarding policy. The policy does not include recent changes in government guidance. These shortfalls have not affected young people's safety, welfare or enjoyment.

The school has effective and productive relationships with parents. Staff work well with all professionals who support young people. This means that young people have effective plans in place to help them to move on to their next placements. These include college and supported living. The school uses each young person's annual review to make relevant and necessary changes to young people's education health and care plans. This promotes young people's ongoing development.

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

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 19.1 Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children as they relate to the purpose of the setting, specifically that all staff including the head of care receive regular supervision. Training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments and including autism and safeguarding.

Recommendations

- The school uses links with specialist services such as sexual health services to help young people to understand the differences between friendship and more intimate relationships.
- The school ensures that arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State, specifically that updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education are reflected in the school's safeguarding policy.
- The school's governing body monitors the effectiveness of the leadership of the residential provision and takes appropriate action to ensure that there is an effective residential development plan.

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/teacher in charge: Mr Mike McCann

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector(s)

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