

Sheiling School

Horton Road, Ashley, Ringwood, Dorset BH24 2EB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The residential special school is run according to principles inspired by Rudolf Steiner. The residential provision provides care for up to nine children with a learning disability and/or physical disability. At the time of this inspection, five children were living in one house within the extensive grounds.

The inspector only inspected the residential provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 December 2024

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: 20 June 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This setting has a strong track record of consistently providing children with excellent care. Staff know the children well, understand their complex individual needs and meet them effectively. The foundations for this excellent level of care are the very strong relationships that staff have built with children and their families. Staff demonstrate their nurturing approach and their love for the children throughout their day-to-day interactions and in how they talk about the children.

Children are making excellent progress from their starting points. Staff are very ambitious, striving for the best possible outcome for each child. Improvements in children's self-care start in the provision, but because of a consistent approach, have since progressed in the family home as well. One child is no longer using their 'safe bed' as they are now sleeping in a standard double bed. Another child is managing their anxiety in social situations better and children are helping with chores around the home. Staff are very proud of the children's achievements and celebrate them by presenting awards during group house meetings.

Consultation with children is meaningful. Staff are very skilled at communicating with children, including effectively using children's alternative communication systems. This approach supports children to be involved in making choices and planning for their futures. Children develop skills that will aid them in the next stage of their lives.

Children benefit from the extensive range of health and well-being services available to them. These services work collaboratively with the residential and education teams to ensure that there is a holistic approach to each child's care. This leads to children's health, well-being and therapeutic needs being well met.

The residential provision provides children with a welcoming home. Throughout the provision, there are photos of children and staff taking part in celebrations and enjoying lots of fun activities, as would be seen in a family home. Each child's bedroom is personalised to their taste. These rooms are well furnished and have lots of the children's favourite toys and possessions. A parent said that they were able to set their child's bedroom up prior to their arrival. Since this time, the child has moved rooms, and when the parent saw what the staff have done with the child's new room, they felt it was amazing. They said, 'it was so him'. Children have the advantage of having access to the school facilities, including the swimming pool, extensive grounds and local woodlands.

The children's plans are current and clearly written. They include input from the parents and as much input as possible from the children. Parents say that they feel very involved in their child's care, with some saying that this is the first time as a family that they have experienced this. All departments of the school work together on these plans, including residential, health, therapy, behaviour management and

education. This approach ensures that there is a truly holistic, consistent approach to each child's care.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care that their children receive and the progress they have made. They told the inspector:

- Communication with parents is excellent. 'We always feel we are included in everything of importance to our child.'
- 'Our child has a lively social life within the house.'
- 'Our child transfers all the skills and maturity they have developed at the school to our home setting.'
- 'Our child is at the heart of every little thing the staff do.'
- 'Staff here are ambitious for our child.'
- 'It is an amazing place. It has saved our family.'
- 'We feel blessed to have found this place; it is like my child has a second family.'

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

Children are kept safe. Their safety and safeguarding practice are managed like a golden thread that runs through all aspects of the children's care.

Stringent safeguarding processes are in place and rigorously applied in practice. Staff have a thorough understanding of safeguarding, which includes clear knowledge of the additional vulnerabilities facing disabled children. All concerns, no matter how minor they may seem, are reported and investigated, and swift actions are taken. Leaders and managers have built strong, effective working relationships with the local authority designated officer and the multi-agency safeguarding hub.

Behaviour management is excellent. Although an experienced behaviour support team has robust oversight of all areas of behaviour management, they do not work in isolation. Again, this is a cohesive and collaborative area of support.

Staff understand that behaviour is a form of communication, and they positively support children. Staff focus on developing a relationship with the child, spending good-quality time with them to understand individual triggers and nuanced changes in their presentation. Staff give early support and help children to understand their feelings, emotions and actions. Restraint is used, but appropriately and only as a last resort.

Staff are not risk averse. Risk is very well managed, which enables the children to take part in a wide range of different, new and exciting experiences safely.

At the time of the previous inspection, staff recruitment presented some challenges. However, this no longer the case, with an increase in the successful recruitment of

several new staff. Staff recruitment is robust and the connection between this and safeguarding is evident.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The provision is led by a very experienced and dedicated leadership team. This team is very ambitious, having clear aspirations for the children, staff, the service and itself. Consequently, the service continues to grow and develop, while maintaining a strong focus on providing individualised care to children.

Leaders and managers have effective oversight of all aspects of the residential provision. They use research and developments in the social care field effectively in order to continuously improve the provision for children. Leaders and managers have shared their practice with the wider social care world. This is excellent practice and demonstrates their commitment in this area to improving services for disabled children.

Staff supervision is very reflective and now also includes input from an external provider. Staff training is of a high quality and ensures that staff have the skills to meet the children's needs. Leaders and managers understand that by investing in the support and development of staff, they are enhancing the support and care that the children and their families receive. This is also reflected in the retention of staff.

Staff are overwhelming positive about working at the school. They told the inspector that they 'love' their job and the children they care for. They feel very well supported by senior staff. Staff and children benefit from the culture of openness that emanates from senior leaders. As a result, staff and children are empowered to put forward their ideas and know they will be carefully considered.

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: 2671699

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Ms Corine van Barneveld

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspectors

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector
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