

Grateley House School

Pond Lane, Grateley, Andover, Hampshire SP11 8TA

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Grateley House School is an independent residential special school for pupils who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Many pupils have other associated difficulties. Each pupil has an education, health and care plan and is usually placed at the school by their local authority. At the time of the inspection, there were 53 pupils on roll and 40 residential pupils. Residential pupils are accommodated in six houses on the school site.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 March 2020

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor.

Date of previous inspection: 5 June 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Pupils benefit from the staff's dedication to meeting the pupils' individual needs. Plans to help pupils make progress identify their specific needs and are linked to their education, health and care plans. Pupils are involved in setting their targets, which are regularly reviewed and adjusted to help them develop. Pupils make progress.

Parents acknowledge the progress their children are making as a result of the hard work of the staff in continuously trying to understand the pupils as individuals. The staff are helping the pupils to maintain their emotional stability and manage their emotions. The consequent reduction in the pupils' level of anxiety enables them to engage in their education, improve relationships and have a greater sense of self-worth.

However, parents and the staff recognise that the current over reliance on overtime in the residential provision is not sustainable in the long term and has the potential of undermining pupils' progress. The pupils, too, acknowledge the impact of staffing difficulties. They appreciate the support from staff in accessing activities but realise that with increased staffing levels, they would have opportunities to experience a wider range of activities. They would also have more support to increase their independence skills.

In addition to significant staffing issues, serious shortfalls are evident in relation to protecting pupils from the risk of harm and the capacity of senior leaders and managers to provide the necessary levels of monitoring to identify areas for development and implement effective action.

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

Serious failures in ensuring that fire safety measures are robustly implemented have resulted in pupils being at risk of harm. Senior leaders and managers have not monitored the implementation of the school's policy that states there should be six fire evacuation drills in a year. Last year, there was only one unplanned evacuation for the whole site in residential time. Remedial work identified as required to meet the fire risk assessment recommendations in 2018 has not been satisfactorily carried out. Management oversight of maintenance, health and safety and fire protection is poor. There have been instances of staff and pupils tripping and slipping on the site, but repairs have not been undertaken to all the areas to prevent a recurrence of such accidents. The maintenance team has been inadequately supported to fulfil their role of maintaining a safe physical environment to protect pupils from the risk of harm.

Placement plans are detailed, giving staff a clear understanding of each pupil. However, consent from parents for the staff to administer first aid has not been obtained.

Information about how the staff should manage individual pupils' behaviour is not cohesive. It is provided in several different places in their records. While this is not contradictory, information does not always dovetail, as information contained in one document is not in another document. This could lead to the staff being uncertain which document to follow and potential inconsistencies in support for the pupils.

The admissions process has been strengthened and improved to assess more accurately whether the school can meet a pupil's individual needs. However, impact risk assessments do not record how it has been decided that a particular house is the most appropriate placement. They also state that staffing arrangements are adequate, despite the chronic need for staff to undertake overtime to cover vacancies in order to meet children's needs.

Physical intervention is used appropriately by the staff to manage pupils' behaviour when there is a risk of serious harm to the pupil or others. However, there is insufficient oversight by managers to ensure that debriefs take place with the pupil and the staff following physical intervention. Opportunities to consider what alternative strategies could be implemented to support pupils are thus lost.

The staff receive regular safeguarding training to enable them to identify concerns. They are diligent in reporting concerns to the trained team of designated safeguarding officers, who ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect pupils.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The head of care provides strong leadership to the residential staff team. However, the team continues to be significantly affected by high staff turnover, staff shortages and ineffective staff recruitment. The shortfall in staffing levels is being mitigated by existing residential staff working overtime and school staff working overtime supporting pupils during the evenings. Consequently, staff morale is low, but the members of the residential team are dedicated and determined to minimise the impact on pupils. This contingency plan cannot be sustained for any length of time and senior leaders do not have clear plans to remedy this situation.

A repercussion of the difficult staffing arrangements is that house managers are undertaking roles in supporting pupils that would otherwise be the responsibility of other members of their team, such as key working. This has had an impact on their ability to support new staff and on their capacity to ensure that new staff have a comprehensive induction programme to enable them to meet the needs of the pupils.

There are some notable areas where senior leaders have identified areas for development and are implementing improvements. The staff are embedding a new approach to promoting positive behaviour and this has been positively endorsed by the pupils. Senior leaders have strengthened the admissions process for new pupils. The multidisciplinary therapy team now has a key role in assessing whether the school can meet a pupil's needs.

However, there are crucial areas, such as health and safety and physical intervention, where senior leaders, managers and the governing body have not paid sufficient attention to monitoring records and practice. They have not taken effective action to ensure the safety and welfare of the pupils.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- 6.2 The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured.
- 7.2 In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'residential time'.
- 19.3 A school ensures that new staff undertake an induction programme designed and delivered to enable them to meet the range of needs of children at the school and fully equip them to identify and safely manage safeguarding issues. The programme should begin within 7 working days of starting their employment and be completed within 6 months.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 12.1 The school has and consistently implements a written policy on managing behaviour, including promoting good behaviour. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching children and their possessions.

Recommendations

- Ensure that information to guide the staff in managing a pupil's behaviour is clear, comprehensive and easily accessible.
- Ensure that pupils' plans include information about contact arrangements with important people in their lives and how their cultural and identity needs will be met.
- Ensure that the impact of a new pupil is considered in relation to the particular group of pupils residing in the new pupil's allocated house and that staffing resources are considered in relation to the pupil's individual needs.

- Ensure that leaders and managers have clear plans to remedy staff shortages so that unsustainable short-term contingency plans do not become the norm.

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: SC012450

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mark McQuillan

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Jan Hunnam, Ofsted Inspector (lead)

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