

Grateley House School

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 students who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Many students have other associated difficulties. Each student 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 33 students on roll and 14 residential students. Residential students are accommodated in four houses on the school site.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 10 December 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 1 and 3 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

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

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 9 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Students are cared for by a skilled staff team that has developed positive relationships with them. Staff have a good knowledge of the students' individual needs and treat the students with dignity and respect. However, because of the currently depleted staff team, students' specific needs are not consistently being met. Despite this, the students report being happy and having good relationships with the staff.

Due to the lack of permanent residential staff, there has been an impact to what students can enjoy from a recreational perspective. Staff try to ensure that there are opportunities for activities and trips out, but these have become dependent on the staffing levels, competency and skills available on each shift.

Staff speak proudly of the progress that students make, for example in relation to their education, social and life skills. Students are equally proud of these achievements and appreciate the way that the staff have supported them.

Students' overall progress is supported by the involvement of a multi-disciplinary therapy team. Having recently expanded, the team now has a more active role in the day-to-day decision-making of the school and in the students' care planning. This allows more students to access support as they overcome the potential barrier of talking one-to-one with a therapist. The result is a greater oversight and a positive impact on the students' mental health and well-being.

Parents are generally positive about the way that the students are looked after and the levels of communication from the school. They are clear that the school helps students to make progress. One parent said, 'My son loves his school and feels well supported by both care and education.'

Students have access to a variety of ways to ensure that their voices are heard. For example, regular one-to-one sessions allow them to talk about how they are feeling and to reflect on any incidents that may have occurred.

Student council meetings are now happening more regularly with a greater number of students taking part. However, while the previous meeting minutes are reviewed, there is not a review of the actions from the last meeting. This is a missed opportunity for students to be able to see the value of the meetings and the impact that they are having.

Complaints from students are rare, taken seriously and responded to quickly. However, one complaint record did not include details of the outcome. This means that students do not always know what happened as a result of their complaint

When medication errors have occurred, they have been reported and acted on swiftly. There have been detailed investigations, and there is clear learning from this shared with staff.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are not fully embedded across the school. For example, there has been a recent change to the designated safeguarding lead that is not known by all the staff. However, all staff spoken with were clear about who the safeguarding team members and whom to report any concerns to.

Overall, the staff have a good understanding of the students' risks and vulnerabilities and act on these appropriately. However, there are inconsistencies in the guidelines and protocols for the staff to follow, especially in relation to the students' self-harming behaviours. This, combined with the lack of availability of protective equipment and consistent staff training, means that the staff are not equipped to manage these situations safely. This places students at risk of further harm. Actions to arrange immediate training and ligature cutter availability were taken during the inspection.

There have been some potential bullying incidents between students. Records of these incidents focus on the perpetrator and do not include or reflect the experiences of the victim. This lack of detail is a missed opportunity to identify any patterns or trends of behaviour.

All staff are trained in behaviour management, including how to hold children safely. The use of restrictive physical intervention is rare and has only been used on two occasions since the last inspection. On one of these occasions, a student was restrained on the floor and did not have their immediate well-being checked until after the incident. This shows that there is the potential for such critical checks to be missed during incidents.

Risk assessments are not regularly updated to ensure that they reflect known current risks to children. The system in place to monitor behaviours does not consider changes to mental health and focuses on physical changes. This does not allow staff and leaders to evaluate whether the house environment is safe for individual children.

Appropriate fire safety checks and health and safety checks are undertaken on a weekly basis to ensure that the homes remain safe. Any actions identified are swiftly responded to.

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

The new headteacher and head of care have high aspirations for the school and have been successful in beginning to implement change on a wider school level. Leaders show passion about the 'journey' the school is on and are realistic about how quickly this can happen.

The ability to make change has been significantly affected by the current staffing situation. There are a high number of vacancies across the residential provision. In order to provide enough care staff, education colleagues from the school are being used to fill the gaps. The impact of this is that the school has not been able to grow in the way that leaders would wish and that students are not given the opportunities that they would hope for. Leaders have responded to this by reducing the number of students at this time as a measure to reduce risk.

The recent reintroduction of face-to-face exit interviews aims to help leaders understand why staff leave the residential provision. Renewed recruitment strategies also aim to help overcome staff shortage by ensuring that there is a wider circulation of adverts and a quicker response by leaders.

Staff describe being well supported by leaders. An open-door policy by the head of care, combined with a more available headteacher, has meant that staff feel confident about who they can talk to when they have concerns. This, together with regular and effective supervision, provides staff with good support.

There are comprehensive plans made to improve the school. These are supplemented by robust standard 20 visits and audits undertaken by the wider organisation as part of their governance role. These allow the headteacher and head of care to be able to continually monitor and assess the progress of the school.

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:

- 15.1 There is a sufficient number of competent staff deployed appropriately, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, to fulfil the school's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the school.
- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

- Ensure that following complaints, students are informed of the outcome.
- Ensure that student council meetings review actions to demonstrate to students the impact they have.
- Ensure that lower-level concerns of behaviour are documented effectively to allow leaders to monitor trends.
- Ensure that when restraints are used on the floor, students' vital signs are checked.

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: Dan Tresman

Type of school: Residential Special School

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