

# Ratcliffe School

Ratcliffe Special School, John Nash Drive, Dawlish, Devon EX7 9RZ

## Inspection dates

14 September 2016 to 16 September 2016

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement 3**

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision requires improvement because

- There is insufficient evidence of good progress in the operation of the residential provision since the previous inspection. Six national minimum standards for residential special schools have not been met. Safeguarding records are not kept to a good standard. Care planning does not evidence the work that staff are doing to support young people. Young people's individual risk assessments do not provide sufficient and accurate detail. Staffing levels are not adequate throughout all times of the residential service. Professional supervision for some staff is infrequent.
- Young people clearly enjoy their stay and feel included in the school community. They stay in a well-kept and adequately furnished environment with a good choice of after school activities. There is good evidence that young people develop their confidence and friendships as a result of staying at the residential provision. There is a strong induction process for young people entering into the provision for the first time and they have good access to specialist health support services. Staff retention is high and they have good relationships with young people. Staff use good behaviour management techniques, which has significantly reduced the need for restraint. The medication administering processes and health and safety procedures are effectively managed.

## Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 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.
- 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.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.
- 20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).
- 21.1 The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Guy Mammatt

Social care regulatory inspector

Lucy Martin

HMI social care

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

The residential special school is a local authority provision for children and young people aged between five and 16 years. It is federated to a neighbouring residential special school. Pupils are of mixed gender, with communication, interaction disorder and social developmental needs, many of whom have been identified as being on the autistic spectrum. The school provides a flexible residential service for 30 children and young people, between Monday and Thursday. In addition, the school provides extended day support usually up to 6pm, for many of the 88 pupils who attend the school. The school is located in a coastal town in south Devon. The school and its four residential houses are on the same campus. All residential pupils have a single bedroom. All residential areas have kitchenettes, dining and sitting areas. The school has largely wooded grounds of approximately 10 acres, including a vegetable garden, poly tunnel greenhouse and pigs. Residential pupils have the use of a wide range of facilities including outdoor hard and soft play areas and many of the school's indoor facilities, such as the computer suite, during planned after school activities. The residential provision was last inspected in February 2016.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Requires improvement**

There are no serious failures that result in children's and young people's welfare not being protected. However, there are shortfalls identified in meeting the national minimum standards for residential special schools, which means that the school does not yet meet the criteria for a good judgement.

The school's safeguarding arrangements require improvement. The impact of the shortfalls has the potential to not safeguard young people. However, currently there are no identified issues which put them at risk.

The managers of the residential provision do not ensure that there is continual focus on improvement. Progress since the previous inspection is not sufficiently evident. Two areas for improvement identified have not been completed and one was in the process of being resolved during the inspection.

Young people report that they have good experiences while attending the residential provision. One young person states that 'it is amazing' and many day pupils choose to stay after school to take part in evening activities with their friends. In some examples, attendance at the residential provision throughout the week enables young people to continue to live with their families on a permanent basis.

Young people make good progress over time with their communication, self-awareness and personal safety, personal hygiene and self-care and life skills. They have good access to education on site, which supports their academic learning and vocational training opportunities.

Young people have positive relationships with the staff. Many of the care staff have worked at the provision for a long period of time, which has enabled them to form strong bonds and good understanding with young people.

Parents' views of the residential provision are positive and they feel that their children do well at the school. Staff are largely positive about working at the school, although many identify staffing levels during busy times of the afternoon as a concern.

### The quality of care and support

**Requires improvement**

Young people's placement plans contain basic essential and medical information, but do not always identify and detail their more complex needs. They do not specify how staff should care for young people and promote their welfare on a daily basis. For example, a young person who has been accused of displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour towards others is beginning a programme to help them understand their feelings and actions. This is not detailed or referred to in the young person's care plan. Another young person has identified to staff that they are being bullied through social media and that the young person harms themselves. The care plan does not evidence this or describe the emotional support that staff should provide. A third young person has limited verbal communication, but there is no communication plan used by residential staff. Consequently, the work that staff do is not being evidenced, monitored and evaluated. It also will not ensure that all staff are consistent in their response to young

people's needs.

Young people and their families receive a good induction when they start attending the residential provision. They have the opportunity to visit as often as they like and have a 'taster day' at the school. The family support worker provides individual support to parents, carers and young people who are new to the school. Staff decorate young people's bedrooms before they arrive. One young person had a 'Star Wars' duvet on his bed on his first day, which he was very excited about. As a result, young people feel welcome and accepted into their new environment.

Young people stay in residential accommodation that is of a good standard. Most of the houses have been decorated in recent years and all houses are well maintained. Young people have large communal areas for dining and to relax in, as well as smaller rooms to use electronic games and play with other toys. They are provided with sufficient, nutritious food. The older residents cook for their group with staff's assistance. As such, they develop independence skills that will help them when they leave the residential provision.

Young people participate in a wide range of stimulating activities throughout the evening. They also have the opportunity to relax after school by watching television or spending time in their room. Staff are mindful to ensure that the same young people do not always watch television and encourage them to take part in activities to ensure that they are not isolated. The activities are open to all young people. Consequently, young people get to know each other well and there is a strong sense of community between them.

Young people regularly engage in house meetings. They choose their daily activities and can request items that are required for their rooms and house. Staff use these opportunities to emphasise the rules and address any negative behaviour that is impacting on young people's choices and others in the house. Young people also give formal feedback to the school through questionnaires. The head of care has yet to analyse and use the results of these questionnaires.

Young people stay in touch with their families in a variety of ways. Many young people have their own mobile phone, there is a pay phone in each house and they have access to the internet on the school's computers. Families can call each house's landline phone to speak with staff or their child.

Young people receive good health promotion while they attend the residential provision. They have access to a dental service and other specialist health professionals employed by the school, such as the school counsellor, a speech and language therapist, a 'Thrive' practitioner and a masseuse. Occupational therapists are contracted in as required.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

### **Requires improvement**

The arrangements in place to safeguard and ensure the welfare of young people requires improvement. Safeguarding records do not evidence that all identified child protection concerns have been shared with the local authority, records of investigations involving young people are not always legible and records do not state how an outcome was reached. The designated safeguarding officer's records are fragmented. They do not provide a chronological overview of concerns that have been raised and their severity.

Young people's individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans are weak. They do not contain important information and do not give staff detailed instruction on how to support young people. There are no dates for evaluation and the risks of their behaviour are not always identified. One young person's risk assessment states that staff are to know his whereabouts at all times, whereas in actuality staff confirmed that they must be in line of sight of the young person. Another young person is known to put herself at risk by indiscriminately eating wild berries. This information is not included in her risk assessments, despite staff being aware of this. It is apparent that staff receive the necessary information about young people through staff briefing meetings. However, this is not backed up by comprehensive individual written risk assessments.

Staff use good behaviour management skills to de-escalate young people's actions before they escalate. Much of this intervention comes from staff's knowledge and experience of supporting the same young people over time and having a good understanding of their needs. Young people engage in a positive reward system for good behaviour. Consequences are not carried over from the school day. However, poor behaviour in the classroom will limit the choice of activities available to them that evening.

The use of physical intervention across the whole school has significantly decreased over the previous six years. Staff are no longer trained to use ground holds, therefore their use has stopped entirely. The use of restraint on young people during residential time is low and has only been used to ensure the safety of the individual involved. There has been one recorded incident of young people going missing from the residential provision. In response, staff effectively followed the school's missing from care protocol. They liaised with the young people's families and the police, while continuing to search the local area. The monitoring of significant incidents is strong. A member of the senior leadership team reviews all incidents weekly and identifies young people that require additional help and support.

The school maintains comprehensive records of the health and safety checks of the premises. All required checks are regularly undertaken and are of a good standard. Fire evacuation practices occur at appropriate intervals and are carried out efficiently. The processes for storing and administering young people's medication are good. The registered nurse is responsible for dispensing all controlled medication and conducting the monthly audits.

The recruitment and vetting procedures for new staff are sound, which helps to make it difficult for unsuitable individuals to work alongside children and young people.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Requires improvement**

There are insufficient staff on duty at each house during the busy times of the afternoon. Most notably between the end of the school day, up to and including dinner, as many day pupils stay on and increase the numbers that staff are required to look after. Residential staff are also required to transport young people home or to public transport connections, which frequently leaves one member of staff by themselves at the house. As some residential young people require a high level of supervision, this means that others will go unsupervised. The same issue was highlighted at the previous inspection. As such, the management team is required to review the current

arrangements and ensure staffing levels meet young people's assessed needs.

The governor's monitoring reports do not include a clear evaluation of the effectiveness of care or whether young people are safeguarded. This was also an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The reports consistently lack recommendations and any indication that actions are followed up at the next visit. Therefore, monitoring by governors is ineffective and is not meeting the required minimum standard.

Staff do not have regular supervision. The school's aim is for supervision to occur once every term. However, the head of care has only had one supervision since November 2015 because of the unexpected on-going absences of the Executive Principal. None of the support workers in one house had a supervision in the summer term of 2016. This does not ensure that all staff are sufficiently guided and supported to fulfil their role.

Policies that were identified at the previous inspection as requiring updates were being done as the inspection took place. Due to absences in the senior management team last term, this action had been put on hold until their return.

The residential provision is an integral part of the school and is given high value. Young people who use the service are well respected and their placements are seen as a positive experience. Many young people and families who attend the school first, have since requested to use the residential provision.

Staff's communication with families is good. Some young people have flexible residential arrangements and go out with or visit their families during the week. Parents and carers are kept up to date following any incidents with weekly reports.

The management team's developmental agenda has been to improve care planning through sharing practice with other residential special schools. As well as introducing a weekly analysis of behaviour and incidents. The school is being extended with two new classrooms and there are plans to decorate the one residential house, which has not been renovated for some time.

The staff's training activities are effective. They are focused on meeting the needs of the young people. Staff work collaboratively across the school to provide young people with consistency and stability. They address difficult and challenging issues and develop a shared approach. Staff report that they are well led and managed.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113656
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC003895
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	30
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	5 to 16
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Cherie White
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	9 February 2016
<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 862939
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