

# North Hill House

Fromefield, Frome, Somerset BA11 2HB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

North Hill House is an independent residential special school for boys and girls aged six to nineteen years, 12 of whom reside at the school during the week. The residential accommodation is provided in three areas. The school provides for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome and associated learning difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 21 to 23 February 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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:** 7 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- The leadership of the residential provision is strong, and leaders and managers have clear plans to develop the provision further.
- Children benefit from being cared for by an enthusiastic, committed and well-trained staff team.
- The way that staff help the children to move into the residential provision is excellent and provides the children with a good foundation from which to make progress.
- Staff build strong relationships with children and their families.
- All aspects of the school, care, education and therapy provisions work closely together to provide children with a holistic service.
- Staff work effectively with children to develop their understanding of their behaviours. Staff support the children to identify and use strategies that help them to manage their emotions and feelings.
- All national minimum standards are met.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- The school playground does not provide children with a welcoming space in which to play.
- The debriefing discussion that takes place with children after a restraint is not consistently undertaken by a member of staff who was not involved in the restraint.
- The records of staff supervision are not of a consistently good standard.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that records of staff supervision sessions are of a consistently good quality and reflect the discussions held, including records of any actions set as an outcome of these discussions. These actions should then be reviewed at the following supervision session.
- Ensure that debriefing discussions held with children after they have been restrained are carried out by a member of staff who was not involved in the restraint.
- Ensure that the playground provision is reviewed and developed to provide children with a more welcoming and stimulating space in which to play.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children are making good progress from their starting point when they moved into the residential provision. Children have made progress to engage better at school, consequently some children have successfully taken exams. In addition, children are learning how to manage their own behaviours, as well as developing and maintaining friendships with their peers.

The children benefit from being cared for by an enthusiastic and committed staff team. Relationships between staff and the children are positive, based on trust and respect. The children benefit from the cohesive, flexible and creative approaches used by care and education staff.

Children say that they really enjoy staying at the school. One said 'I love residential', and another child agreed and said that they have so much fun and that the staff are great. Some children said it was like having a second family.

The way that children are moved into the residential provision is excellent. This is achieved at a pace that suits the child and their family. By taking this approach, staff are able to reduce any anxieties that the child and family may have, while building strong and effective relationships. The moving in process is not rushed and has been effective in setting strong foundations from which the child can make progress. Staff review the work that they do in this area after each new child has moved in to see how it could be improved for the next child. This is good reflective practice.

Children benefit from being able to access a range of therapies provided by the school. The therapy team works very closely with the care and educational staff to develop a holistic approach to meeting the child's needs.

Care staff ensure that children have access to a vast range of activities. These activities are linked to the children's existing interests, as well as providing them with the opportunity to try new and exciting ones. The children benefit from the activities. They have fun and develop their self-confidence and social skills.

The management of children's healthcare needs is good. Staff work effectively with external healthcare professionals and also support children to develop a healthy lifestyle.

Overall, the residential accommodation is of a good standard. It is spacious, very well furnished and welcoming. Each child has their own room, and they are supported and encouraged to personalise it. Each of the three residential areas has a small kitchenette where children can prepare snacks and drinks.

The playground at the school does not provide children with a welcoming or stimulating space in which to play.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Safeguarding practices are good. The new safeguarding lead has audited all of the safeguarding records and reviewed the safeguarding management systems. This work has led to an improvement in the quality and clarity of the safeguarding records that staff keep. All safeguarding issues are promptly addressed and action is taken to protect children. Staff spoken to demonstrated a good working knowledge of the safeguarding procedures.

Children feel safe at the school. They have built strong and trusting relationships with staff. All children spoken to could identify a number of staff whom they would go to if they had any worries or concerns.

The staff team is skilled at identifying risks and implementing effective strategies to reduce or eliminate them. Staff also work with the children to develop their understanding of risk and help them to learn how to keep themselves safe. One aspect of this is the work that the staff team do with the children regarding keeping safe online.

Staff use positive reinforcements and rewards to help children to behave well. These strategies have been very effective and children have made good progress in this area since they moved into the residential provision. These positive strategies are part of the therapeutic approach used by staff that is linked to helping children to understand how their behaviour affects others. Staff help children to develop techniques that help them to manage their own feelings and emotions. Parents praised staff for their work in this area.

Incidents of bullying are rare. When they do happen, staff quickly address the concerns using a 'no blame' approach.

Restraint is used only as a last resort to keep children safe. Records of these events are mostly appropriate. However, on a few occasions the debriefing discussion that was carried out with a child after a restraint was undertaken by a person who was involved in the restraint. This may make it difficult for the child to raise concerns about what happened. Senior managers audit incidents of restraints. Their scrutiny of restraints where high-level holds have been used is good. Where necessary, senior managers have worked with the designated officer to assist in this audit.

Since the previous inspection, there have been no incidents of children going missing from the residential provision.

Staff are recruited in line with safer recruitment guidance.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Since the previous inspection, a new organisational structure has been implemented and a new headteacher is in post. The new leadership and management team has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The team has devised a comprehensive and ambitious development plan that evidences its high aspirations for the service. The residential provision is recognised as an important aspect of the school. The staff team is committed to providing the children

with a high standard of care.

The residential provision is led by an experienced, well-trained care coordinator. He demonstrates a child-focused approach and enthusiasm for his role. The care coordinator is an excellent role model for the staff team. He advocates effectively on behalf of the children and the staff team. Staff demonstrated passion when talking about their work and the children whom they care for. Good levels of well-trained staff are in place to care for the current number of children. Due to the numbers of children who now stay in the residential provision, the number of waking night staff has been reduced. Leaders and managers are keeping this staffing level under review.

The staff team is skilled in developing positive relationships with children's families. One parent said that they could not speak highly enough about members of the staff team. Another parent said, 'I was very worried about my child's future when he moved here, but he is a changed person and is now a lovely young man.' Other parents said staff are like an extension of their own family and described them as 'brilliant'. Parents praised staff for the care and support that they give to their children and to them as parents.

Staff receive regular supervision which covers all aspects of their role. The records of these sessions vary in quality. Some of the records do not contain enough details about the discussions held with staff, or the actions set.

Systems used by staff to monitor the quality of care have improved, but these are still being embedded into practice. An independent person regularly visits the residential provision. Their reports are of a good quality and help leaders and managers to make improvements to the provision. Leaders' and managers' response to the actions raised by the independent person has improved greatly, and recommendations made by the independent visitor are now addressed swiftly.

Individualised plans are in place for each child. These plans are kept under review to ensure that they meet the child's current and emerging needs. Children are encouraged to help to develop these plans.

The school's policies and procedures are suitable and adhered to in practice. These documents are regularly reviewed and amended as required: At the inspection, the school's website was being updated to incorporate information about changes to the staff team and the policies.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC033014

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Steve O’Gara

**Type of school:** residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector





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