

Arbour Vale School

Arbour Vale School, Farnham Road, Farnham Royal, SLOUGH SL2 3AE
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Arbour Vale School is a maintained residential special school located on the outskirts of Slough. It provides education for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. Some pupils have an autistic spectrum disorder. The school's residential provision, Arbour Vale House, is purpose built and located within the school grounds. There is accommodation for 12 pupils. The stated aim of the residential provision is to work on specific objectives with pupils who attend the residential service through education programmes, extended learning opportunities and the delivery of a 24-hour curriculum. Overnight placements are from Monday evening to Friday morning, inclusive.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 June 2017

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: 20 September 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- Safeguarding processes, procedures, documentation and records lack detail and clarity. They do not detail the decision-making processes used to ensure the safety of the children. The audit trail is weak. One incident was not reported in line with the school's policy and procedure.
- Policies in relation to safeguarding have not been updated in line with current guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Staff have yet to be provided with a safeguarding policy or procedures to follow.
- Recruitment of staff does not meet safer recruitment guidelines. Staff have worked without evidence that they are suitable or able to work with children and vulnerable adults. Records do not clearly detail dates when references were verified. The single central record is not complete.
- Performance management of staff is weak and lacks rigour. Staff supervision occurs regularly but the quality is poor. Managers identify areas of weakness but have not implemented robust plans to improve practice and performance.
- The senior leadership and oversight of the residential provision are weak, lacking rigour and challenge.
- Governance is weak, with governors not having met their regulatory duties. There has been no oversight or scrutiny of the residential provision.
- The independent visitor has not undergone rigorous safer recruitment checks, and is not independent as required in the national minimum standards.
- Staff have not achieved, the required qualification. However, all staff are now working towards this.
- The residential service statement of purpose does not state that the school is able to accept emergency admissions. There is no clear process to follow when it does so.
- Records, as described in appendix 3, have not been monitored or evaluated.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Each child has a trusted adult they can confide in and seek support from.
- Staff support children to learn and use strategies that assist them to self-regulate and manage their anxiety and behaviour.
- A strong focus on behaviour has enabled staff to identify triggers and causes of misbehaviour; this has enabled them to support children to manage these anxieties and learn more appropriate ways to express themselves.
- Residential staff offer a wide variety of activities which enable children to develop skills which enhance their future life chances.
- Children are supported to use a wide variety of communication aids suitable to

their needs, which greatly helps them to communicate their needs to others.

- There is a stable residential staff team whose members are empathic, caring, knowledgeable and motivated.
- Residential staff have accessed the required training which is appropriate for their role.

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:

- 2.2. The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. Children are informed who this person is, and how to contact them and they are easily accessible. Children are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, to ring in case of problems or distress.
- 2.4. The school makes all reasonable efforts to obtain all necessary information about a child's health, education and care needs, prior attainment and achievements prior to (or in an emergency, at the time of) admission.
- 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.
- 13.4. The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.9. The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- 14.1. Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 19.2. All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment.
- 20.4. The headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards. Where appropriate

such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

Recommendations

- Monitoring visits should be unannounced and 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.

Inspection judgements

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

Significant weaknesses have been identified in 'how well children and young people are helped and protected' and 'the effectiveness of leaders and managers'; if these weaknesses are not fully addressed and risk is not mitigated in the medium and long term, this will have a direct negative impact on children's experiences and progress.

An appropriately qualified acting head of care is in day-to-day control of the residential provision. The residential staff team works effectively to support and promote children's experiences and opportunities to make progress. Staff offer children a wide variety of activities, opportunities and experiences which promote their future life chances while developing essential life skills. Staff give children choices about activities, and are involved in deciding and planning them. Activities include art and craft, trips to parks, accessing the community, learning about different faiths and cultures and attending scouts and a youth club.

Staff support children to develop life, social and personal care skills. Staff act as role models for play and interactions with peers. Children develop friendships and play with or alongside their peers. They have improved their personal care skills, including learning how to dress, wash, make their beds, lay a table and improve their continence. A parent commented that 'the residential staff have helped; we all work together to help my child become continent day and night.'

Targets are developed, set and monitored regularly. Staff involve children in choosing what they wish to learn and where they might improve. They also seek the views of family and professionals. Education targets and residential targets complement each other; staff support children to develop and achieve their personal targets.

Staff are consistent in their approach and provide structure across all settings. This promotes children's understanding of expectations and boundaries, and enhances their ability to self-regulate anxiety and behaviour. A high staff ratio is positively utilised by staff to support children with communication and play throughout residential time.

Residential staff aspire for each child to achieve their full potential. Staff are motivated, and each has a real understanding and knowledge of each child.

The residential area is well presented and homely. Children can access several areas in the home to calm, relax or play in. There are many photographs on display in the home. There are photographs of those who have moved on. Staff use these as positive role models for children, celebrating what previous pupils have achieved.

There are many communication aids throughout the home. Children use these to describe how they feel, or what they would like to request from staff. Staff routinely use a child's communication aids to support them to understand what is happening, or coming next.

There is open access to the sensory room, which is regularly utilised to support children to calm down and manage their behaviour and anxiety. Staff also offer a wide variety of sensory activities each day which include messy play, sand play and water play.

Children's views are gained through questionnaires, house meetings and informal interactions with staff. Children make day-to-day choices about their daily care.

Staff encourage children to widen their horizons and improve their diets by exploring and trying new foods. A child who previously refused such foods now eats a wide variety of fruit, vegetables and salads. Staff encourage children to lead a healthy lifestyle by offering a well-balanced diet, encouraging exercise, and supporting them to manage their emotional well-being. Children engage in physical activity, with swimming and football being favoured activities. Staff have also offered canoeing, archery, dancing and adventure activities. Children's lives are enriched by their stays in the residential provision.

Children are encouraged and supported to follow and embrace their chosen culture, religion and ethnicity. Staff have supported children to attend their chosen place of worship. They celebrate a wide variety of religious festivals and celebrations. Staff provide education about the diverse society they live in. Staff have helped children to become accepting and respectful of each other's chosen preferences and beliefs.

Staff treat children with dignity and respect. Children have secure relationships with staff, seeking comfort, support and guidance from them. Staff have formed positive working relationships with parents and carers, and provide regular information and updates to families about progress and achievements made.

Detailed plans provide practical information and advice to staff to enable them to support each child. For those with complex health needs, clear health plans provide essential information that guides staff. Staff follow clear plans that detail required actions and interventions if a child's health deteriorates and they require emergency medication.

Residential staff support children to transition across the site each day to and from education. Residential staff have effective communication with education staff, which promotes the consistency of approach across both settings. Staff support parents to attend meetings and reviews of their child's progress, acting as facilitators for those whose first language is not English, but also providing moral support and assistance.

Parents have provided very positive comments regarding the quality of care their children receive. Residential staff have supported families to use strategies at home

to provide consistency and structure for their children. Families have stated that they feel that residential staff have improved their children's lives, and have enabled their children to become as independent as possible.

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

Each child has a trusted adult they can confide in, and communicate their worries and anxieties to. Children have developed very positive, stable, secure relationships with residential care staff.

The school safeguarding policy and procedure has been updated, but has not been ratified by governors or shared with the staff team. The policy remains in draft; it does not include all of the required information. It lacks, for example, detail of how leaders ensure that staff have an understanding of their responsibilities, or what actions are required following an incident of sexting.

Safeguarding concerns have been reported, recorded and referred to others. There are concerns regarding the quality and detail of the records. All actions and conversations are not recorded in full, leaving an insufficient record of events and actions taken. The trail of evidence is not thorough and may not withstand serious review and scrutiny. There are no time-lines or chronologies to assist in evaluating timeliness of tasks completed, and not all concerns are reported in a timely manner.

Centrally held records detailing staff safeguarding training are incomplete. This impacts on leaders' knowledge and understanding of who has completed the required training and who still needs to. However the head of boarding has maintained records for the residential staff that demonstrate that they have completed the required basic and more detailed training.

There have been no incidents of missing children, but staff have clear policies and procedures to follow if such an event occurred. Missing plans detail essential information to assist those managing an incident.

There are significant failings in the school's safer recruitment process. The records do not evidence that the process meets the statutory requirements. There are no dates showing when references have been verified. The recruitment policy does not detail what actions are required to sign off those in voluntary roles. Records do not evidence that staff who have been absent for long periods of time have been subject to a review of their health, and their ability to fulfil their role.

Staff are all trained in the school's preferred approach to behaviour management. No physical intervention has been used in residential time for over a year. Staff are

aware of each child's presentation and behaviours, and use a wide variety of known strategies and techniques to distract, de-escalate and provide an environment and activities to encourage children and allow them to calm down in a non-confrontational way.

Staff frequently reward children's positive behaviour and achievements through lots of verbal praise, certificates and celebrations. Staff avoid the use of sanctions, choosing to encourage and support children to use their calming techniques in times of anxieties.

The house rules are well known and are displayed in the home. There have been no concerns about bullying. There are several posters on display that talk about bullying, and what to do if you are concerned.

E-safety is frequently talked about, and there are clear rules of 'what to do' and 'what not to do' displayed in the house. There is also visual guidance near each computer that a child may use. The school's restrictive access system supports the effective e-safety management.

Risk assessments explore all known risk factors and identify what is required to minimise risk. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed, along with other plans and assessments. There are individual risk assessments personalised for each child and more general assessments exploring risk factors for on- and off-site activities. These provide staff with practical information and guidance to support them in managing risk.

The residential house environment is well presented and safe. There is a lack of clarity in the leadership of the school about who is responsible for what. The management company of the building is responsible for the management of the environment. Documentation evidences that regular maintenance and monitoring checks are completed as required. The house fire drill records show regular day and night-time drills and evacuations. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan. The fire drill and evacuation records for the school building are not all up to date as required, and there is no written evidence of a fire drill before January 2017. The action plan shows that findings from the fire authority visit earlier this year have been implemented.

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

Residential managers have sustained and stabilised the leadership of the residential provision. An appropriately qualified acting head of care is leading the residential staff team effectively. Managers have developed and created several systems to regularly review and monitor the quality of care provided to children who reside at the school. They evaluate and monitor plans, assessments, the environment and

many other areas, daily and weekly.

The residential staff team works as a stable cohesive group whose focus is the children they care for. Staff have robust, effective working relationships with parents. Managers have good knowledge and understanding about the needs of those in their care, and are child focused.

The school has been through a challenging period. Currently a temporary leadership arrangement is in place to manage the school. The governance of the school is in its infancy, and a small group of selected governors are in the early stages of taking control of the very unsettled school community. The previous governing body resigned or did not return in March 2017, and a new governing body was selected by the local authority to address the serious weaknesses which have been identified. Currently the governing body does not have representatives from all stakeholders of the school.

Significant weaknesses have been identified in the quality of scrutiny, challenge and oversight of the school by the governing body. It has not fulfilled its duties with regard to the residential provision. There is no evidence to show that robust critical scrutiny was applied to the finances of the school. There is no evidence of an annual report being provided to the governing body regarding the boarding provision.

The independent visitor to the home is not independent as described in the national minimum standards. A report was provided following the visits, but it does not cover all of the required areas as described in the national minimum standards.

There have been no complaints made by children or others about the residential provision.

The school's statement of purpose details the aims and objectives of the school. It does not celebrate all of the work, support, experiences and opportunities that young people are offered during their time in the residential provision. The school accepted an emergency admission earlier in the year, and the statement of purpose does not detail what arrangements and processes are in place when this occurs.

Staff receive regular supervision and their practice is appraised at least annually. The quality of supervision is poor. Managers have not monitored staff practice to ensure that areas of weakness identified have improved or been developed in a timely way; this has led to drift and lack of professional challenge. There has not been robust performance management to ensure that staff practice develops and improves. A new performance management system is being introduced but has yet to be implemented.

Residential staff access a wide variety of training that equips them for their role. Staff have recently completed epilepsy training, and all residential staff have updated their safeguarding training this year. Staff have the required qualification or are enrolled to

achieve it, but they have not done this within two years of their employment commencing. There are no records to evidence equivalence of qualifications.

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 differences 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

Unique reference number:

Social care unique reference number: SC370928

Headteacher/Teacher in charge: Tracey Bradshaw, acting headteacher

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector(s)

Amanda Maxwell, social care inspector (lead)



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