

# Langham Oaks

School Road, Langham, Colchester, Essex CO4 5PA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	01/03/2017 to 03/03/2017	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- Children and young people make good progress during their time in the residential provision. In particular, they maintain positive relationships with each other and the staff. This helps them to improve their confidence and self-esteem.
- The staff encourage children and young people to engage in education. For some, this has been particularly positive, as they had not been in education for some time prior to attending this school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Governors monitor these through regular visits. However, the scrutiny of reports and policies needs to develop to enable greater improvements.
- The staff have aspirations for children and young people. They consider how they can consistently support the children and young people to reach their full potential.
- The staff make clear assessments of risk so that children and young people can engage in a variety of activities safely.
- All staff have completed safeguarding training. They receive an induction and ongoing training. This provides them with the knowledge that they need to meet the children's and young people's needs.

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

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

- 3.6 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional well-being are promoted. These policies include first aid, care of those who have chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care).
- 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 three 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. When appropriate, such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that internal and external monitoring arrangements are rigorous and provide sufficient challenge to make further improvements.
- Ensure that when children or young people are involved in a physical intervention, the associated record demonstrates that they have been offered the chance to discuss the incident with someone who was not involved in the intervention.

## Information about this inspection

Two inspectors began the inspection three hours after it was announced. The inspectors spent time in the residential provision observing and participating in meals and activities and observing the interactions between the staff and the children and young people. Meetings took place with children and young people, the headteacher, the head of care and the residential staff. Discussions were held with parents, and the chair of governors. Inspectors sampled a variety of records including recruitment, safeguarding and behaviour management. The responses to the online questionnaire Parent View were considered as part of the inspection process.

## Inspection team

Michael Mulvaney	Lead social care inspector
Ashley Hinson	Social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Langham Oaks, which is situated on the outskirts of Colchester, is a residential special school with academy status. Up to 28 pupils reside at the school for between two and four nights a week. The school caters for pupils who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The last welfare inspection took place in January 2016.

## Inspection judgements

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

Good

The school is currently experiencing a shortage of teaching staff. Consequently, the headteacher is teaching a full-time curriculum. Although this does not directly affect the residential provision, this additional responsibility has limited her capacity to drive improvement.

The children and young people make good progress because of the support that they receive in this residential provision. Some had not attended any school provision from a very young age. Since becoming pupils at this school, they have engaged in education and are making progress. This is because of the joint work between the education staff and the residential staff. Parents spoken to during this inspection said:

- 'He makes lots and lots of progress, so much. At primary school he was finding it very difficult. Since he has been at this school he has settled in and they have gained his trust. He has progressed in such a fast manner it is ridiculous.'
- 'His behaviour has improved 100% since being there [at school]. He has come on tenfold with his schoolwork. He is doing GCSEs and this is a total achievement.'
- 'I would recommend the school without even thinking about it. If every child could have a school like that, it would be amazing.'

Leaders and managers are working with the senior residential staff to promote safe-care arrangements. They highlight, monitor and, in appropriate circumstances, share with the safeguarding agencies any safeguarding issues.

The staff use a positive reward system. They link rewards to conduct in the school and the residential provision. This means that the staff can encourage improvements across the 24-hour curriculum.

The staff work together closely to ensure that there is little antisocial behaviour or bullying. As a result, the children and young people have good relationships with one another. They attend regular meetings in which they discuss issues in the residential provision. The staff record and act on the children's and young people's views.

Children, young people and their families report that they have positive relationships with the staff. Interactions between the children and young people show positive regard, nurture and affection. The staff have created nurture boxes to help children and young people to learn to manage their feelings. The staff support them to use these boxes, particularly if they are anxious or frustrated, as a way to help them to remain calm.

The children and young people report that they are happy in the residential provision. Their comments include:

- 'When I was younger, I made a wish that I could come to a school like this.'
- 'I fit in at this school.'
- 'I get on with the staff; we have great fun.'
- 'Before I came to this school, I used to get frustrated. Being here has helped me to be calmer and learn more.'

Young people's care plans provide support and guidance for them to shop and budget for meals. The staff guide and encourage them to develop skills such as planning and preparing a meal, which they intend to share with visitors who will be attending a fundraising event at the school.

The leadership and management of the school have improved since the last inspection. At that time there were 10 unmet national minimum standards and four areas for improvement. The school has met eight of these national minimum standards, with two remaining unmet. These are in regard to staff qualifications and the updating of policies. A further national minimum standard is unmet in respect of the oversight of the residential provision.

### **The quality of care and support**

**Good**

The staff know and understand the children's and young people's needs. Care plans include an analysis of any risk factors, which means that the staff have the most up-to-date information to work with. The staff work together as a multi-agency team, which promotes the good quality of care. The team includes qualified therapists who help the staff to understand the children's and young people's emotional health. The staff use this additional knowledge to meet the children's and young people's needs effectively.

The staff encourage the children and young people to take part in healthy activities, such as tag rugby, cycling and walking. Other activities include swimming, roller-skating and go-karting. Children and young people decide which activities they wish to participate in each night. The staff support them to engage in new events and they participate in activities with the children and young people to motivate them. This helps to improve the relationships between the staff and the children and young people and to raise their self-esteem. Observations of the interaction between the staff, children and young people saw them engaging well and having a great deal of fun.

Children and young people benefit from a varied menu and food that is cooked on the premises. They contribute to choosing the dishes on the menu. Fresh fruit and other healthy snacks are available for them to enjoy.

The residential accommodation is arranged in dormitories. It is warm and welcoming and provides space for children and young people to spend time alone or in groups. Routine maintenance ensures that the physical environment remains safe, clean and tidy. The staff involve the children and young people in some household tasks, such as washing up and gathering laundry. This will help them to develop the skills that they will need as they become more independent.

The children and young people board at this school for between two and four days a week; the remainder of the time they are at home with their families. They are able to contact their families during their stays. Parents do not report any concerns regarding communication with their children or with the school.

The staff have suitable arrangements in place to ensure that the children and young people are safe and protected from harm. All staff have access to a database to record concerns or worries. Designated safeguarding leads in the school and in the residential provision review this database routinely. This is effective in highlighting any issues quickly and it helps to detect patterns or trends in a child's behaviour. The school has been swift to contact the local authority when there have been child protection concerns. A social worker commented, 'The information from the school was clear and helpful to us in making a decision to begin our assessment.'

The staff know the procedures to follow if they have a concern regarding the conduct or behaviour of a colleague. Since the previous inspection, there have been three concerns shared with the designated officer for safeguarding in the local authority. The headteacher acts promptly to make the officer aware of the issues involved and she manages incidents appropriately.

The staff have had e-safety training and they understand the need to be vigilant. They carefully monitor the children's and young people's use of the internet, ensuring that they are safe online.

The staff encourage the children and young people to manage their relationships with one another in a calm and respectful manner. The staff receive training to manage challenging situations. They understand the children and young people and use their skills and knowledge to de-escalate situations.

The children and young people do not go missing from this school. The staff are aware of the risks to the children should they be absent without permission and of the processes to follow should an incident occur. Each child has a missing-from-care protocol in their file. The protocols include recent photographs and contact details, which are readily available to share with the police if required. This means that staff are able to act quickly and provide information immediately if the need arises.

There has been an improvement in the recruitment checks for new staff. References are verified and the outcomes are recorded. This helps to ensure that unsuitable people do not have access to children and young people.

Since the previous inspection, there has only been one incident of physical intervention. The staff did not offer the child the opportunity to speak to an independent person following this incident. Consequently, the child did not benefit from this additional safeguard.

Observations of the interaction between the staff and the children show suitably warm and open relationships. The children and young people say that they are safe in this provision and that they enjoy the activities provided. The head of care reviews the comprehensive risk assessments and updates them when the risk factors change. These risk assessments are shared with the staff who use them to work confidently with the children.

The staff complete health and safety checks during the routine maintenance of the residential provision. They conduct fire drills and assessments, which help to protect children and young people from this specific risk.

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

**Requires improvement**

A suitably qualified, trained and experienced head of care manages the residential provision. Since the last inspection, two deputy residential managers have been appointed. This provides valuable additional managerial support and has had a positive impact on elements of the service. For example, records of meetings with the children and young people have improved considerably.

Although staff who should have level 3 qualifications still do not, they are now enrolled on a relevant course and are working towards them. Managers are considering the equivalency of other staff's existing qualifications to identify any gaps. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The residential staff team is stable and sufficient in number. However, it remains the case that the majority of staff do not yet possess the relevant level 3 qualification.

Leaders and managers have updated a number of the school's policies, which are available on the school website. However, the medication policy, despite being updated and passing through a number of layers of internal scrutiny, does not contain the information required and includes inaccurate information about staff training. This does not provide suitable guidance for the staff.

Leaders and managers have improved the monitoring of the residential provision. An independent person now visits unannounced and the governors have sight of the subsequent reports. However, the reports have limited evaluation and analysis. There are times when the reports refer to incidents that have occurred but offer little insight. For example, they refer to sanctions but do not consistently report on whether or not they are appropriate or effective. The reports offer little information regarding the views of staff other than the head of care. Most significantly, they do not conclude with an action plan and there are occasions when issues identified are not noted as followed up. In addition, leaders and managers have not completed an annual review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision as outlined in the national minimum standards. Consequently, monitoring is not yet strong enough.

The staff work well together and take pride in the work that they do. They are positive about the support and guidance that they receive. They have regular supervisions and annual appraisals. Inductions are effective and new staff demonstrate an impressive knowledge of the whole service.

Families report that communication between them and the school is excellent. There has only been one complaint since the last inspection, which leaders and managers resolved to the child's satisfaction.



## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors 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 exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact that 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 that children and young people are not protected or that their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or that their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141512
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	1213822
<b>DfE registration number</b>	881/7000

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>	24
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Emma Paramor
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	20/01/2016
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 271571
<b>Email address</b>	admin@Langhamoaks.co.uk

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