

Wolverdene Special School

Wolverdene School, 22 Love Lane, Andover, Hampshire SP10 2AF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a local authority school for primary-age children who are experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school uses an approach which draws on research in neuroscience, attachment theory, effective learning, child development and the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) model of care to underpin its work. There are currently 56 children on the school roll.

The school provides mainly day placements. Ten residential placements are available for boys in The Lodge, where they stay for up to four nights a week. It is situated in the school grounds. At the time of this inspection, three children were staying at The Lodge, with one other child accessing The Lodge on an extended day arrangement.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 November 2024

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 last inspection: 25 April 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children love coming to The Lodge. They talk with great excitement and glee about all the fun activities they get to do, and the staff and peers they spend time with. After school, the children run into The Lodge and into the arms of the staff who care for them. It was evident how pleased they were to see each other, and the strong, and nurturing relationships staff have built with the children.

Staff provide children with high-quality individualised care and support based on their comprehensive understanding of each child's needs and how to meet them. Achieving the best for the children is at the core of all the work undertaken by staff. This approach is clearly role modelled by the leaders and managers.

Children are making good progress from their starting points. Staff celebrate this progress with the children, which supports their ongoing development and increases their self-esteem and sense of self-worth, developing their own sense of self and identity. A weekly celebration assembly highlights children's successes and achievements, with staff nominating children for awards. Children also nominate staff for awards. Two children in The Lodge nominated two of the staff there, one for being kind and fun, and another for helping a child when they were upset.

Consultation with children is seen as essential to the children's development. This takes place on an individual basis and there is also a school council. Children can talk about issues that are relevant to them and put forward their ideas and debate their issues. These are fun and enjoyable sessions, as well as being effective. The council sessions are well managed and carefully structured to best support children to get their views across to one another, as well as feeling valued and listened to.

Children can take part in an extensive range of activities in The Lodge, on the school site and in the community. Staff are skilled at incorporating learning, such as road safety and being kind to one another, into fun activities.

Mealtimes are very social events, with everyone talking about their day and what they want to do that evening. Children are involved in preparing and cooking meals, which provides them with another learning opportunity.

The Lodge is a welcoming and child-friendly environment. It is well furnished and filled with lots of games, books, toys and DVDs for the children to enjoy. Children's bedrooms are personalised to their individual tastes. The Lodge garden needs work done to make it an inviting space for children to use.

Children's health needs are well managed and met. Staff have devised and implemented a safe system for taking children's medication to and from the child's home to school. Staff understand the medications the children are taking and why. Children benefit from being able to access high-quality, timely therapy and specialist

support when needed. This is delivered by the in-house therapy team, who support children, their families and the staff team.

When children move into The Lodge, this is sensitively managed at a pace to suit the child and their family. Staff meet children in their classrooms as well as visiting the family home. Leaders and managers assess the needs of the child, how the staff can meet these and how the child will get along with the other children in The Lodge. This process can include the child coming to The Lodge for extended days, which helps reduce their anxiety. The same care and attention are taken when children leave The Lodge and school for the next stage in their lives. Staff create wonderful memory boxes which contain mementos, treasures and photos showing their happy times at The Lodge and school.

Parents and social workers were very positive about The Lodge. They said that communication is excellent. They receive regular updates and staff are easy to contact. Parents said how impressed they are with the way staff treat them and their child. One parent said, 'Their compassion and understanding has been a total breath of fresh air.' All noted the progress their child is making and how this improves their life, experiences and family relationships.

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

All aspects of safeguarding are addressed effectively and well coordinated, which protects children. The designated safeguarding leads are experienced and well trained for their roles. They ensure staff receive regular good-quality training on contextual safeguarding. There are effective working relationships with the local authority designated officer (LADO), with referrals being made in a timely manner and staff implementing the guidance from the LADO.

The child's voice and safety are central to all safeguarding actions. Leaders and managers challenge effectively and escalate concerns when child protection matters are not getting the right response from partner agencies. The chair of governors and the safeguarding governor routinely scrutinise all safeguarding concerns and undertake regular safeguarding audits, which provide additional effective oversight to keep children safe. Staff provide children with a nurturing and reassuring response that is tailored to the child's situation and needs.

The focus of behaviour management is positive reinforcement that celebrates positive behaviours. Staff use a range of therapeutic approaches to support positive behaviour, and support children to reflect on challenges and repair relationships in the event that these are compromised by behaviour. In addition, the school uses a rewards-based system to recognise positive behaviour which the children understand and like.

Each child has an individual behaviour support plan which is very detailed and regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects the child's current and emerging behaviours. The behavioural lead has good oversight of all behavioural incidents and reviews all

the associated records. This allows them to identify any patterns or trends and take action to address these.

When restraint is used, this is proportionate. Staff are creative in having meaningful conversations with children after any incident to help them reflect on what happened and what they could do differently in future. This includes using art, cartoons or toys to support the child and develop their understanding of their behaviours and how to manage them. Records of restraint are generally clear and detailed. However, some staff are not recording the duration of each individual hold.

Risk is well managed, and staff are not risk averse. They understand the risks for each individual child and have strategies in place to reduce the level of risk. A key part of this work is to help the child to understand and manage risk at an age-appropriate level.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the service, its strengths and areas for development. Leaders, managers and staff have high aspirations for the children, the service, themselves and for each other. They are excellent role models for the children and they focus on doing what is best for the children and giving them the best possible future.

Staffing levels have been a challenge. This has led to leaders and managers making the difficult decision to reduce the number of days and nights the residential provision is open. This was done to ensure staff could still provide the children with good-quality care and positive experiences. Staff have worked diligently to ensure the impact on children and families is minimal. Recruitment has taken place and is ongoing. Leaders and managers understand that staffing issues have limited some of the developments they wanted to implement. However, they have started an outreach programme to provide additional support to children and families.

New staff said their induction is well paced and comprehensive, preparing them well for their role. All staff have regular good-quality supervision and training. Staff say leaders and managers are open, transparent and supportive. They feel leaders and managers are easy to talk to, they are listened to and their ideas and views are welcomed. Care staff have close working relationships with education staff, which support shared practice and consistency of the care provided to children.

Since the previous inspection, in April 2023, all policies and procedures have been reviewed and amended as required. These provide clear information and guidance for staff, which supports their work and reflects current practices in the service.

Some children's records contain vague, emotive or institutional language and do not provide a clear picture of events or support the effective monitoring of these events. In addition, they would not help a child's understanding if they wish to access their records later in life.

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

Points for improvement

- Leaders and managers should ensure children's records do not contain vague, emotive or institutional language as this does not provide a clear picture of events to support effective monitoring.
- Leaders and managers should ensure all restraint records include the duration of each hold used.
- Leaders and managers should ensure work is undertaken to improve The Lodge garden to make it a welcoming space for the children.
- Leaders and managers should ensure staff shortages are addressed to enable The Lodge to provide additional residential nights for children.

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: SC012029

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