

Rossendale School

Moor Side Farm, Bamford Road, Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire BL0 0RT

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Rossendale School is an independent special school, providing education for pupils who may have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder. Pupils are subject to an education, health and care plan.

The school provides education to pupils between the ages of seven and 18 years. A total of 19 pupils are currently staying in the residential provision. The residential provision operates Monday to Thursday inclusive, term time only.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 March 2022

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 3 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children's relationships with staff are a strength at this school. Children have trusted and secure relationships with staff. Throughout the inspection, observations between children and staff were extremely positive and staff know children very well. Staff intuitively know what children need and how best to support them to progress.

Children told inspectors that they can talk to staff if they are worried or upset, that staff help them plan how to try new things, spend time with them and give them the confidence to get involved in different activities. Some children spoke very positively about what they have achieved with their independence and how it is helping them try different things at home, for example making friends and getting part-time employment. One child said:

'It was hard, going into new places when I didn't know how they would react, but I did it and I have a job now. I can spend my wages. I can go on the tram by myself and meet my friends.'

Children are nurtured in residence through clear boundaries and high expectations of living in a positive and warm community. Friendships are encouraged and often blossom. Children are encouraged to build empathy and look after each other. One child said: 'I have gained a lot in confidence. I have made friends and I am looking forward to a future for me now.'

Children have a range of positive experiences, including social and recreational, which help them to understand their emotions and how to better regulate them, thinking about others and being more flexible and confident in all their relationships. Children understand their developmental goals and are confident in what staff are going to do to help them achieve these. For example, independent travel is individualised to meet children's specific needs.

Residential staff support children at school, so they know what the day has been like for children. They know their academic achievements and where they need support. Often residential activities support children's coursework, for example piano lessons for a child who wants to be a music producer.

Children talk openly to staff about their wishes and feelings. Staff are attentive to their needs. As a result, there are no complaints in residence.

Children's health needs are known and well managed. Children can access internal and external services, for example play therapy, psychology and psychiatric services. This helps to improve and sustain their mental and physical health. Children also receive specialist support to help them understand and explore past trauma and poor experiences.

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

Children all say that they feel safe in residence and that staff are kind. They say that they enjoy spending time with staff and that they are helped to try new experiences and grow in independence. Staff ably support children to take safe and appropriate risks to stretch their confidence and capabilities. Children thrive because staff support them practically and emotionally. Over time, children spread their independence wings, and some of them enjoy weekend jobs, tram travel to meet friends, and exciting camping trips with community groups.

Children experience highly coordinated and sensitive responses from staff when they are experiencing events and behaviours that place them at increased risk of harm. Staff are vigilant to any changes in mood or behaviour that may indicate children are in distress. They use the strong and warm relationships that they build with children to explore what is happening for and to children.

Children trust staff and can choose from a wide range of staff in whom to confide. Staff make themselves available to children when they need them. This helps children to talk about their fears and worries and to work together with staff to make plans that build towards positive solutions. A comprehensive, multi-professional approach as well as parent and carer contact and regular oversight ensure that children's welfare is paramount during any investigation or critical incident.

Children do not go missing from residence because when children go off site staff follow them and bring them back safely. Children are helped to understand their emotions and frustrations that led to this event, and this helps them to regulate better in future.

Staff understand children's vulnerabilities and have effective strategies in place to support them well. Staff's knowledge of the children and the quality of their supportive relationships with them are significant strengths. Children and parents say that staff genuinely care.

Restraint does not occur in residence. On the few occasions when it occurs in school, residential staff demonstrate the same positive approach to supporting children and it is used minimally to keep all safe.

All safeguarding practice is of high quality, led by a knowledgeable and experienced designated safeguarding lead and deputies. Staff have completed comprehensive training and development, including day-to-day reflections about children's safety and welfare. Staff act promptly to respond to any child protection matters raised, including any allegations made against staff. They liaise efficiently with external professionals to protect children.

Leaders and managers have commissioned a different approach to behaviour support, and a rigorous staff training scheme is being implemented. This approach

better reflects the school's philosophy, where child-centred, emotional awareness and self-regulation skills are key to reducing anxiety, upset and associated troubled behaviour.

Children show remarkable insight into their vulnerabilities and their goals to be stronger and more confident achievers, from finding less harmful ways to express frustration, to overcoming anxiety and compulsive behaviour by changing a little at a time. They say that this kind of progress is possible because they trust staff to keep them safe and they learn new skills in understanding positive relationships.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The school is led very effectively and efficiently by trained and experienced managers. The headteacher and head of care are aspirational for children. Together they are focused on continually improving the experiences and care for children. They achieve this by remaining confident and ambitious for children and what they can achieve.

The staff team is stable and consistent. Leaders and managers have created a culture of aspiration and positivity. Staff work collaboratively to provide consistency and they are committed to cover any gaps on staff rosters. Staff share a sense of ownership about their practice and they have high aspirations for the children and what they can achieve. Staff actively gather and reflect on children's thoughts and views about the residential provision, and they take these into account when they are planning children's activities.

Staff told inspectors that they are well supported and they described good morale. Staff supervision is of excellent quality. Staff reflect on their practice and talk in detail about the children who they care for. Furthermore, managers use supervision sessions to develop staff by identifying any areas for their personal and professional development. This links effectively with training and development opportunities to ensure that staff are refreshed with new professional challenges and development.

There are high-quality internal and external professional relationships that focus on meeting children's needs by educating children well and providing them with safe and positive experiences during their time at school. Staff attend all professional review meetings of children's plans and work with placing authorities to secure positive futures for children.

There is excellent feedback from parents and carers. This demonstrates effective and meaningful relationships, and this supports their children's development. One parent said that her child now has a future because of the work that school and residential staff have done with her child. Many parents talked about staff going the extra mile to help their children. One parent said staff have 'helped to put past poor experiences behind him, more manageable situation at home, he is mixing with others, excited about rugby and football trials. Another parent said of her son:

'Because of past trauma, he doesn't want to put himself in that position of being bullied and hurt again, but residential has built a safe environment that meets his sensory needs, breaking down the barriers that are in place. Staff genuinely care and work in partnership.'

There is external scrutiny from governors. They know about the school's development plans and actively monitor them for progress.

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: SC009656

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr George Mills

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Catherine Fargin, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Denise Jolly, Social Care Inspector

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