

North Hill House

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 providing weekly boarding for boys and girls aged six to 19 years.

The school provides education and care for children with autism spectrum disorders and associated learning difficulties. The residential provision can provide care for 20 children. At the time of the inspection, seven children were accessing the provision.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school. However, the education provision was inspected separately at the same time as this inspection.

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 September 2022

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 15 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are looked after by a head of care and core staff team who have a wealth of experience and the right skills to meet children's needs. The team communicates respectfully with children and provides care in a way that ensures children's dignity. Interactions between staff and children are warm, nurturing and affectionate. Parents' feedback is, without exception, positive. They say their children have thrived because of the residential care provided.

Since the previous inspection, three children have left the residential provision and two children have moved in. The children have benefited from these moves being carefully planned and successfully implemented.

Children are relaxed and comfortable in their environment. They say that they enjoy staying in the residential provision because they make new friends and have lots of fun. Children are positive about the staff who care for them. They told the inspector that the staff are kind and fun to spend time with.

After-school time is full of activity. Children are encouraged to make good use of the games and resources available to them in the residential setting and the wider community. The broad range of activities promote children's health, well-being and social skills effectively. Memory books and positive achievement records provide children and their families with a lovely visual reminder of the fun times they have had.

Children are provided with good opportunities to express their views, wishes and feelings. Student meetings take place monthly and enable children to share ideas about changes they would like to happen and activities they would like to try. The manager responds to all requests and when possible acts on them. Children are well informed of any staff changes and of visitors to the residential accommodation. For example, children were told about the new independent visitor and their role and responsibilities.

Children enjoy healthy, nutritious home-made meals. Children and staff cook and eat together in the large spacious kitchen-diner. The head of care confirmed she is looking at opportunities to further improve children's dining experiences.

Since the last inspection, there have been six reported complaints. Records of these complaints are well maintained; they detail the actions taken and confirm the outcome.

Children say that they have not been bullied and if they were concerned about another child being unkind to them, then they are confident that staff would help them resolve their differences. Records confirm that there have not been any

reported incidents of bullying or consequences imposed for unwanted behaviour since the last inspection.

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

New systems and processes have been introduced to strengthen the management and oversight of safeguarding concerns. These are in their infancy and therefore it is too early to measure their effectiveness.

Since September 2021, there have been eight reported safeguarding concerns. Seven of these have been appropriately referred to the local authority designated officer and/or multi-agency safeguarding hub as required. One concern was not dealt with in line with safeguarding procedures. The safeguarding team did not take appropriate safeguarding action when a child made a disclosure. The designated safeguarding lead took immediate action and made a retrospective referral at the time of this inspection.

Safeguarding meetings take place weekly. Minutes of these meetings require improvement. They do not provide sufficient information to confirm safeguarding procedures are followed, what actions have been taken and who is responsible for them.

Since the last inspection, there has been one reported significant incident. The head of care took immediate and effective action. The children and staff involved, including those who witnessed the incident, were given an opportunity to talk about their feelings afterwards. This provided the children and staff with the support they needed and an opportunity to reflect, to consider why the incident happened, and to learn from it.

Effective systems are in place to ensure the safe management of medication. The storage, administration and dispensing systems in use minimise the risk of medication errors. If required, staff have access to ligature cutters that are kept in appropriate places. This means staff can respond quickly in the event of an emergency.

Safer recruitment practices are followed effectively. As a result, children are looked after and educated by adults who leaders and managers have assessed as safe and suitable. However, the single central register was missing information about the newest member of staff. Immediate action was taken to rectify this shortfall.

The residential provision is maintained to a good standard and health and safety checks are completed as required. Children regularly practise fire evacuation drills and are clear about what actions they need to take in the event of a fire. However, some of the school's environmental risk assessments lack clarity on how to identify, manage and mitigate risks. Leaders and managers agreed to review these with the estates team.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of care provides good and effective leadership and management. She is well respected by the staff team. She has successfully created a culture that encourages all staff to have high aspirations and expectations for the children they care for. Staff are a cohesive and child-focused team who place children's well-being and development central to their practice. Staff talk with pride about the children and their achievements.

Children benefit from being looked after by staff members who have a wealth of experience and know the children well. High staffing levels enable staff to provide children with regular one-to-one support. As a result, children are making progress and achieving their individual targets.

The head of care ensures that all staff receive regular formal supervision, where they are provided with good opportunities to reflect on their practice as well as their well-being. Team meetings take place every other week and are well attended. The agenda always includes discussions about the children and any potential safeguarding concerns. The manager ensures that the team is provided with an opportunity to keep abreast of legislative changes. For example, they are fully aware of the revised statutory guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education, September 2022', and the new national minimum standards.

All staff have received basic mandatory and specialist training. The training courses available to staff help them to understand the children's needs and how to support them. The head of care has researched additional specialist courses that would enhance the team's knowledge and understanding of the current children's changing needs.

In May 2022, the senior leadership team appointed a new independent visitor, who visits the residential accommodation half-terminally. Reports are informative and evaluative. The head of care takes immediate action to address recommendations to improve the quality of care and support children receive. The independent person obtains feedback from children, staff, parents and social workers where relevant.

The head of care regularly reviews the residential provision to identify development opportunities. However, the current development plan refers to the national minimum standards rather than exploring how those standards can be exceeded by incorporating the head of care's aspirations and forthcoming plans to improve children's residential experiences.

Feedback from parents about the residential provision is overwhelmingly positive. One parent described the residential team as their 'second family'. The same parent said their child's residential experience has been life-changing for him. Another parent said, 'The residential team is fantastic. Staff go above and beyond for every child and their family. The team provides a safe, welcoming, inclusive, caring environment for my child to grow and thrive.'

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 standards for residential special schools:

- Each child's file includes the information in Appendix B (individual records). In particular, in relation to the single central register and child protection records. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 5.2)
- The school should ensure that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.1)
- The school ensures that the welfare of children at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 14.3)

Points for improvement

School leaders should ensure that the development plan accurately reflects the head of care's aspirations for improvements in the residential provision.

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: SC033014

Headteacher/teacher in charge: James Lynch

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01373 466222

Email address: JamesLynch@AsprisCS.co.uk

Inspector

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022