

Greenbank Residential School

Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1LD

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Greenbank Residential School is a local authority-maintained school for the education of children aged 11 to 18 with moderate or severe learning difficulties and/or language and/or communication difficulties.

The residential provision provides care, support and educational opportunities for 44 children and young people. Each child has an individual residential package for one night each week during term time.

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 March 2022

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 previous inspection: 4 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care from a stable and committed staff team. Staff use their positive relationships with children to help them think about their circumstances and work hard with them to engage with the challenges. For example, on the day of the inspection, the school heating system was broken, which meant it was too cold for the children to stay overnight. Instead of cancelling the children's stays, staff worked creatively to ensure that children could have extended school days with time spent in residential. This clearly benefited children, who told inspectors that they were pleased that they could spend some time in residential before they went home.

Staff know children well. They put children's well-being at the centre of their practice, and this was observed throughout the inspection. Children are comfortable with staff and they have fun together. Inspectors observed warm relationships between children and staff. Children told inspectors that they like the staff and that they enjoy their time at residential.

Careful matching means that children get to spend time with their friends and other children that they get along with. One child told the inspector that staff changed her night so she could spend time with another child who has similar interests. The inspector observed these children making cards and drawing pictures together.

Children contribute to their plans. Children have clear targets that are realistic and achievable, and they make progress. Residential staff find activities and opportunities that children like. Activities are tailored to children's different levels of ability. This helps to make the activity meaningful and supports children's participation. Activities are well planned and often have an educational focus, for example budgeting.

Children recognise that the care and support they receive from residential staff helps them in their lives. Children spoken to talked happily about their time in residential. They told the inspector that their time there was 10 out of 10.

Parents are very positive about their children's care and their experiences at residential. One parent talked about how a member of staff has helped her implement strategies at home. She said that this has made a difference to their family life. Another parent said that since her child has spent time in residential his confidence has grown, and he will now go out shopping.

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

Children are settled and clearly enjoy their time in residence. As a result, there have been no incidents of physical restraint, sanctions or episodes of children going missing from care.

Children benefit from high staff ratios during evening activities. This level of supervision is aligned to children's assessed needs and supports children to maximise their engagement in structured activities.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's individual risks and vulnerabilities. They are responsive to children's needs and take effective action to reduce the risk of harm to children. Any concerns are reported to the designated safeguarding lead without delay. There is good communication and liaison with the school staff team. This ensures that all staff are updated about any incidents or concerns about a child's welfare.

Each child has a risk management plan that identifies strategies to help staff to mitigate and control risk. However, managers have not always monitored and reviewed these plans to ensure that the control measures in place remain suitable and safe.

Children are supported by a consistent staff team. This helps children to build positive and trusting relationships with staff. Children told the inspectors that they felt safe and that they could share any concerns they had with staff.

Children receive help and support to manage their relationships. Staff use lots of praise to promote children's positive behaviours. This is reflected in the calm and settled atmosphere in the home. In addition, staff are creative and design individualised activities to aid children's understanding of healthy relationships and boundaries.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a suitably qualified and experienced head of care in place. She is supported by two competent, enthusiastic and motivated senior staff. The staff team works well together and they are child-focused and aspirational.

Leaders and managers actively monitor the quality of care through a strong relationship approach. However, leaders and managers have not consistently reviewed and evaluated control measures in one child's risk assessments. This is necessary to ensure that daytime control measures continue to be safe and effective through the night. Leaders and managers recognise that this an area for improvement.

Inspectors identified shortfalls in the recruitment and vetting procedures for new staff. Leaders and managers have not followed the statutory guidance for staff recruitment. They have not consistently ensured that any anomalies in application forms and any gaps in employment histories are fully explored with the candidate. Furthermore, not all candidates' references are verified with the referee.

Leaders and managers have developed effective relationships with children's parents and carers. Parents spoken to were positive about staff. They describe good communication and talk positively about the care that staff provide for children.

Staff describe a supportive environment and say there is a sense of shared ownership about their practice. Staff spoken to say that they have frequent supervision and that this helps them in their roles. Leaders and managers acted on the recommendations from the last inspection and staff have had training in updated statutory guidance. However, leaders and managers could not demonstrate how this training is evaluated for effectiveness.

Monitoring by an independent visitor ensures that there is independent oversight. The independent visitor was there at the time of the inspection. He told the inspectors that leaders and managers routinely meet actions from his reports. He said that leaders and managers keep him updated about any relevant information in between his visits.

Governors are present and engaged. They visit the school and regularly review and monitor the school's policies, practice and records. The chair of governors demonstrates a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to work on.

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 for residential special schools:

- 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. (NMS 14.1)

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they regularly monitor children's risk assessments to review the effectiveness of control measures and if they need to be changed.
- The registered person should ensure that they review the effectiveness of staff training to ensure that all staff are updated with relevant policies and practice developments.

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: SC006624

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Michael McCann

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01606 288028

Email address: head@greenbank.cheshire.sch.uk

Inspectors

Catherine Fargin, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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