

# Moor House School & College

Moor House School & College, Mill Lane, Oxted, Surrey RH8 9AQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Moor House School & College is a co-educational, non-maintained residential and day special school. It provides specialist schooling and therapy for children and young people with speech and language difficulties. The school and college are leaders and specialists in developmental language disorder (DLD).

At the time of inspection, there were 147 children and young people on the roll. There are 64 residential places. Children and young people who stay at the school are weekly boarders.

Moor House School & College is a registered charity.

Ofsted conducted an education inspection in October 2017 and judged it as outstanding.

**Inspection dates:** 24 to 26 January 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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:** 8 November 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Children and young people thrive in this residential setting. Some develop language from a starting point at which other professionals said that they would never talk. Others who were once school refusers go on to gain GCSEs, A-levels and university places.
- Children and young people who stay in the residential setting feel safe and secure. There is an excellent approach to supporting children and young people towards independence, for example travel, while keeping them safe.
- Children and young people who stay in the residential setting blossom in their confidence and self-esteem. Those who have had very poor school experiences and, in some cases, have refused school look forward to their return to the provision after the weekend.
- Children and young people behave exceptionally well. They are respectful of their peers and the adults around them. They know who to go to if they are worried about anything and are confident that staff will listen to them.
- The residential staff team is excellent in all disciplines; for instance, they are leaders and experts in DLD.
- Staff place each child or young person at the centre of practice. They view life at the school and college and residential setting from the child or young person's perspective. Residential staff support children and young people to understand why they need speech and language therapy.
- Safeguarding practice is an exemplar to other residential schools. Keeping children and young people safe is embedded in the fabric of everything that staff do. The designated safeguarding lead is supervised and challenged by an independent social worker. When risks are identified, staff put comprehensive control measures in place, fully involving parents and carers in the process.
- Governance is a strength. A team of experienced and qualified governors spends regular and purposeful time in the school and residential setting. Governors with a specific responsibility for safeguarding hold 'case reviews'. These are of exceptional quality. The senior management team uses such rigorous monitoring to inform minor changes in procedures, for example the pre-admission procedure.
- Parents speak in the most positive terms about the care, support and progress of their child as a result of staying in the provision. One parent said, 'They are a beacon of support and teaching which I wish could be replicated throughout the country.'
- The director of research is an established professional in the field of developmental language disorder. The school and college work with a university to undertake research and to publish findings. Professionals from across the world seek advice.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Residential staff do not always document the advice given to them by health professionals, and the subsequent action that they take, in the children and young people's healthcare plans, for example in relation to a change to medication administration.
- Residential staff do not record decisions about the allocation of bedrooms in a format that evidences the rationale for decisions about children or young people who may feel vulnerable.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Document all health advice, and the action taken as a result, in healthcare plans.
- Document, in a written risk assessment, the decision-making process for sleeping accommodation.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children and young people who stay in the residential setting make extraordinary progress. Some, whose parents had been told that they would never talk, now engage in conversation. Others, who at one time refused school, go on to gain academic qualifications and university placements. A parent said:

My child has thrived in this setting; he has turned out to be calm, well behaved, polite and respectful of others while still feeling relaxed and comfortable in the boarding setting. We are very fortunate to have found such a well-organised, compassionate and modern setting for our son.

The residential provision has a track record over many years of young people successfully progressing to education, employment or training.

Children and young people see the school and college as a home from home. They love coming to board weekly, enjoying the comradeship and family atmosphere. One young person said, 'I love it here' and another, 'I enjoy seeing my friends and the staff take good care of us.' A parent said:

The residential provision is exceptional. It is a home from home for my son who was truly anxious before starting. He loves it. To his delight he can now play with his friends in the evening and he feels safe and secure with the support and guidance of the staff.

Children and young people who stay in the residential setting blossom in their confidence, social interaction and independence. They are respectful of their peers and the adults around them. A parent said:

My child has progressed with his independence beyond our wildest dreams. He is now maturing into a sensible, practical and considerate individual who can look after his own daily needs and be mindful of those living around him.

Children and young people with speech and language difficulties have a strong and clear voice. They enjoy daily dialogue with the staff, confident that they will listen to them. Residential key staff make regular time to have catch-up sessions and they document these exceptionally well. Children and young people who stay in the residential setting have a school council and a college forum to represent their views. They also participate in the 'RezSez' and '16Up' group, where staff hear and act on their views. An example is the conversion of a bedroom into a quiet room where children can play games together.

Residential staff have made the complaints procedure very accessible to children and young people who experience speech and language challenges. Children and young people feel confident that residential staff will take seriously any concern that they

raise. Staff keep a written audit trail of the action they have taken. Children and young people can also speak to an independent visitor who visits the school regularly and is well known and well liked.

All professionals at the residential setting, school and college work together as a team, focused on the individual needs of children and young people. They communicate exceptionally well so there is a consistent approach. The attendance at the school and college of children and young people who stay in the residential setting is excellent, with these children and young people making outstanding progress in their education. A parent said, 'I would never have believed my child could take GCSEs. It is nothing short of a miracle.' Senior staff at the college have produced a comprehensive booklet to help young people and their parents to consider future transitions. This includes questions to ask at university open days, as many parents have never considered this an option for their child, thinking it was an impossibility.

Of particular note is the approach to independent travel. Occupational therapists and residential staff assess children and young people's individual needs so that they can access the local community, neighbouring towns and travel further afield, while being kept as safe as possible. Children and young people respect the approach, keeping to the boundaries and developing their independent skills. Speech and language therapists have developed a driving theory group to support older students to get their licence. Staff have developed a relationship with a local driving instructor who has experience of special education needs, so that young people are able to obtain their driving licence while at college. Staff go the extra mile, such as visiting family homes to teach young people bus routes to their new college.

Children and young people who stay in the residential setting speak highly of the range of stimulating and meaningful activities available to them. They say that boredom is not an option. Children and young people enjoy healthy activities such as football, swimming and gym, during the residential time. A parent said, 'My child has a more fulfilled life than if she was at home.' Children and young people demonstrate a concern for the wider community; for example, they have elected to raise funds for a charity that supports adults with physical disabilities.

Residential key staff ensure that children and young people are in good health. They decide with parents who should take the lead on healthcare and ensure that the necessary consents are in place. The residential staff have systems in place to ensure that children and young people attend the necessary health appointments. Staff are acutely aware of issues relating to mental and emotional well-being. They demonstrate an excellent sensitivity to each child and young person's needs, being alert to any minor changes in behaviour or presentation that could indicate all is not well. Residential staff respond appropriately, utilising the skills of professionals within the school and college or engaging with other specialist services, such as child and adolescent mental health services, when necessary. However, residential staff do not always record the advice health professionals give, and the action the staff take, in

children and young people's healthcare plans, for example in relation to a change in the way a young person takes their medication.

Children and young people who stay in the residential setting can communicate with their families and others who are important to them, and they use various forms of technology to stay in touch. Parents comment most positively about the communication with residential staff. A parent said:

We get in-depth weekly feedback from her main care worker which is insightful and informative. It is a highly effective arrangement and it feels like everyone is working on the same team to the benefit of our daughter.

Children and young people speak highly of the friendships they make. They are able to visit friends in other houses within the provision as well as friends they make in the wider community. A young person said, 'It is like being part of a big family.' A group of young people who stay at the residential setting said that they love it at the college.

A highly skilled team of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists use innovative and creative methods to prepare children and young people for independence. They teach within the context of the real world, integrating learning into everyday life. Using the Moor House College Wheel of Independence ® or Moor House School & College Compass of Independence ®, they track individual progress across the whole residential provision, school and college experience. They focus on learning that is important to each child or young person. Therapists communicate clearly with others so that the approach in the residential provision echoes what is happening in therapy.

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

All residential staff demonstrate a thorough knowledge of safeguarding principles and practice. A culture of keeping children and young people safe is embedded in all that staff do. Consequently, children and young people who stay at the residential setting feel safe and secure. They trust the adults around them, confident that the staff will take swift and decisive action in the event of any concern. Residential staff enjoy an open and transparent relationship with parents. They discuss all the needs of the children and young people in their care in order to protect them from harm. On occasion, this involves referring to other services such as child adolescent and mental health services.

Children and young people who stay at the residential setting behave exceptionally well. They are polite, courteous and respectful of each other as well as to the adults around them. Criminal offending, episodes of children and young people going missing from the setting and the misuse of substances are unknown in this residential provision. The need for any form of physical intervention is extremely rare. There has been one such intervention since the last inspection. Residential staff

documented this exceptionally well, senior managers reviewed the incident meticulously and there was no recurrence. Skilled staff use their de-escalation skills to help children and young people manage their feelings and behaviour safely. Staff clearly record sanctions and these are reviewed by the head of care. Children and young people learn from the use of such strategies; they understand the boundaries and stay within them.

Bullying has not been identified as an issue in this residential school and college. Children and young people said they have not experienced bullying or observed it taking place throughout the provision.

The whole team around the child is involved in writing comprehensive risk management plans; these are undertaken with the full involvement of the parents. Staff update plans regularly so that there is a sensible approach to ensuring children and young people take age-appropriate risks.

An independent social worker supervises the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy safeguarding leads, acting as a critical friend. This, together with the half-termly safeguarding discussion by the senior management team, helps residential staff to understand any complex issues and reflect on their practice. There is a clear route to deliver any learning to the wider staff team so that it can provide safe care. The safeguarding governors have a thorough understanding of child protection. This is exemplified through their high-quality safeguarding monitoring visits.

All residential staff place a high value on children and young people's emotional well-being. They are acutely aware of idiosyncrasies and any subtle changes in children and young people's presentation that might suggest something is amiss. Senior staff have designed and implemented a student health and well-being system (SHaW) to capture all data. SHaW is the umbrella for all disciplines to bring all their planning together, removing duplication and confusion for children and young people. Senior leaders recognise the importance of good emotional health and the impact on learning and development. They employ an integrative child psychotherapist to provide additional support, including family work, with clear plans to extend the role to a full-time position. They have employed teaching assistants, who are trained to provide children and young people, including those who stay in the residential setting, with emotional and social skills.

Residential staff demonstrate empathy for children and young people when they are anxious, such as when they hear of tragic events in the national news. For example, staff produced a comprehensive presentation on how they keep children and young people safe in the event of fire. Staff provided extra support for those children and young people who they anticipated would find the next fire evacuation difficult.

Although all children and young people who stay at the residential setting have single bedrooms, staff appropriately assess the risks of children and young people living in the same accommodation. They use a floor plan to consider the most suitable arrangements. However, the decision-making process is not formally documented.



A diligent and competent site manager ensures that the necessary health-and-safety certification is in place within the residential setting. He is meticulous in his approach, ensuring that systems are in place to provide the necessary prompts to update certification. Other professionals, such as those in the fire and rescue service, have commented on the standard of excellence and said it is worthy of wider dissemination.

Key staff adopt safer recruitment practices. They ensure that all the necessary checks are in place before an individual starts work at the school and college. They employ adults deemed to be suitable to work with children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

An exceptional senior management team (SMT) leads the residential school and college. A strong and active governing board underpins the team's leadership. Although there have been several consecutive outstanding judgements over many years, the SMT is not complacent. It strives for continuous improvement within the residential setting, for example by taking full advantage of the independent monitoring. An independent visitor provides a comprehensive report to the SMT with various recommendations that it takes extremely seriously. This residential special school and college strives for a truly excellent standard of care.

Of equal importance is the outstanding residential staff team. Most members are long serving and see their role as their vocation in life rather than a job. They go above and beyond the call of duty; for example, key workers have come in on their days off to celebrate a birthday with their key child. Morale is exceptionally high. Residential staff speak highly of each other and of the SMT. They appreciate the wide and varied training they receive and they are able to apply such learning to their practice. Staff feel that they have the skills and support to provide the best possible care. It is noteworthy that a staff well-being committee considers regularly how to provide the best possible working environment for the residential team.

Residential staff take responsibility for care planning. They are meticulous in their approach. They ensure that records clearly demonstrate the needs of each individual child and young person and how best to care for them. Key workers are diligent at reviewing and updating children and young people's files. They ensure that the most relevant and up-to-date information is readily accessible to the reader.

Residential staff speak highly of their supervision. They say that this is a safe space where they can reflect on practice as well as discuss any personal issues that could affect their work. Staff enjoy group supervision, when they receive peer support and challenge to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

Parents enjoy excellent relationships with residential staff. They speak in the most positive terms about how staff care for their child. Parents appreciate the regular communication they receive about the well-being of their child. They say that staff

listen to them and act on any concern, no matter how minor it might seem. Equally, other professionals such as placing social workers state that communication is first-rate.

Senior managers use various methods to monitor the progress of individual children and young people who stay in the residential setting. They use results to provide the right support to the right individual at the right time. They can demonstrate the progress that children and young people make, especially in their receptive language and expressive language.

Governance of the residential setting is strong. The governing board consists of a range of people with the necessary skills and experience. The individuals act as critical friends. An 'every child matters' subcommittee maintains a strong focus on the welfare of and outcomes for children and young people. Safeguarding governors play an important role. They are well trained and experienced. They complete case reviews if necessary, producing reports that are exemplars. In one case, this resulted in senior staff strengthening aspects of the pre-admission process that relate to safeguarding, ensuring that the induction to the school and college is tailored to individual risks.

The residential setting's buildings and environment are maintained to a high standard. The school 'village' is extremely well designed, of a high standard and has a warm, domestic feel. Senior managers have plans to refurbish older buildings and governors have a clear strategic direction for the long-term future of the school and college.

The school has a director of research and training. She is a respected professional in her specialism, both within the United Kingdom and overseas, publishing papers on developmental language disorder. She has established a relationship with a university, supporting undergraduates to complete research projects at the school and college. Residential staff learn about such projects and understand their own unconscious bias.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC013926

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Helen Middleton

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Keith Riley, social care inspector (lead)  
Dawn Godfrey, social care HMI



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