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 55 children on the school roll.

The school provides mainly day placements. Ten residential placements are available for children, where they stay for up to four nights a week. The residential provision is situated in the school grounds. At the time of this inspection, six children were staying in the accommodation overnight.

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

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 October 2025

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: 6 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children love their time at the residential provision, particularly the wide range of engaging activities available to them. These activities are not only fun but also help children develop important social skills such as cooperative play, sharing, kindness, mutual support and recognition of both their own and others' achievements.

Children make good progress, which staff actively celebrate both individually and within the group. They have improved self-esteem and a growing sense of self-worth. Children begin to understand and embrace their own identity. Additionally, they are learning how to build and maintain positive relationships with their peers. Leaders and managers frequently review children's plans to capture the progress children are making and to identify any barriers to progress.

Children have strong, positive relationships with staff. Staff are highly nurturing and demonstrate genuine care and affection through both words and actions. These relationships are built on staff's detailed knowledge of each child, including their individual needs and how best to meet them. Staff provide high-quality support, with children placed firmly at the centre of everything they do.

Leaders carefully plan for children joining residential, moving at a pace to suit the child and their family. Consideration is also given to the children already staying. Leaders and the manager carefully plan which groups of children stay each night to ensure that every child has the best possible experience during their time there.

Children's voices are a clear strength. Staff actively involve children to shape their experience, with staff consistently valuing and seeking their input, ideas and opinions. This inclusive approach is further supported by a highly effective school council, which provides children with an additional platform to express themselves and contribute to decision-making.

Children benefit from a welcoming environment, with personalised rooms and communal areas well stocked with games and toys. Outside, children play on the school site, however, the dedicated garden space is less inviting and does not offer a space for play.

Children's healthcare needs are well met. Medication is managed robustly, with all medicines stored securely. Staff are aware of the mental health needs of some children and actively support families in accessing additional help from external agencies. Children also benefit from access to the school's therapeutic team.

Feedback from parents is positive. They praise the staff for all they do for their children and for the support provided to families. Parents described staff as approachable and expressed trust in them to care for their children well.

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

Children are safe because of the skills of staff. Staff have a strong working knowledge of safeguarding practices, including their roles and responsibilities. Responses to safeguarding concerns are swift, comprehensive and well managed. The safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and well trained for their roles. All safeguarding work is effectively scrutinised by the safeguarding governor, who conducts regular audits, providing additional oversight and assurance of safeguarding practices.

The management of children's behaviour is good. Staff have a strong understanding of each child, enabling them to identify and respond effectively to individual support needs. They recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and understand the impact of past trauma on a child's behaviours. Behaviour plans provide clear guidance and support for staff, reflecting both known and emerging needs, and staff are quick to adapt to changes. The behaviour lead maintains robust oversight of all behavioural incidents and reviews associated records, allowing for the identification of patterns and trends and enabling timely, effective responses. Staff celebrate and reinforce positive behaviour and make effective use of reward systems.

When restraint is used, it is proportionate and appropriate. Following any incident, staff employ a wide range of methods to support meaningful conversations with children, helping them to reflect on what happened and consider how they might manage similar situations in the future.

Staff are not risk averse and manage risk well. They have detailed strategies in place to reduce risk levels effectively. A key aspect of the risk management process is supporting children to develop their awareness and understanding of risk, including how to manage it appropriately for their age and stage of development.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leaders and manager have a detailed understanding of residential, including its strengths and areas for development. Leaders, managers and staff are aspirational for the children and the continued development of the service.

Since the previous inspection, staffing has continued to be a challenge. Leaders and the manager have made the difficult decision to reduce the number of days on which they open to ensure children still receive positive experiences and high-quality care. Leaders and the manager acknowledge that staffing shortages have limited some of the developments they had hoped to implement.

Staff induction and training are of good quality. Leaders and managers closely monitor training to ensure staff receive what they need to best support the children, while also supporting the professional development of each team member.

Staff are very positive about working at the residential provision and they speak with pride and passion about each child. Staff feel well supported by leaders, managers and colleagues and describe working together as a cohesive team to achieve the best outcomes for the children. Residential staff say they work closely with education staff, which supports consistency in the care provided to children and promotes shared practice.

Supervision takes place at an appropriate frequency. However, records of supervision sessions do not currently reflect the discussions held or the full extent of support provided to staff. The head of care has recognised this and developed a new template, although it has yet to be implemented.

Policies and procedures are current and reflect actual practice. However, some of the policies and procedures published on the school's website are outdated and do not match those currently in use.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure the records of staff supervision sessions reflect the discussions held and the support provided.
- School leaders should ensure work is done on the garden to make it a welcoming and useable space for the 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

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Nathalie Akhmatova

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Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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