

# Shenstone Lodge School

Birmingham Road, Shenstone Wood End, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 0LB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Shenstone Lodge School is a co-educational residential academy catering for children who experience severe social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.

Across the sites, there are 98 pupils on roll. The residential provision is situated on the Shenstone Lodge site, which offers education for pupils aged six to 13. The residential accommodation can house up to 12 children each night, Monday to Thursday. Currently, three children stay one night per week and one child stays for two nights.

The head of care has been in post for six years and has the relevant qualifications and experience to manage the provision. The inspector only inspected the residential provision at this school.

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: 14 to 16 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:** 11 February 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Children make excellent progress socially, emotionally and behaviourally because of the dedicated, experienced and committed staff. Staff provide a stimulating environment in which children thrive and learn.

Targeted and focused activities are carefully planned and overseen by staff to help children to learn how to share, negotiate and compromise. The quality of the activities and attention to detail mean that children make significant progress in their interactions with each other. Staff regularly review activities to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the children while giving them the best possible experiences and opportunities to learn.

The residential provision has a warm and nurturing feel. There is a wide variety of games, books, DVDs and computer games for the children to enjoy. Children also have the opportunity to play outside using the school equipment. This supports children to learn to play together and listen to each other's views and acknowledge their feelings.

Staff manage highly individualised transitions for children into residence exceptionally well. They involve the children and their parents from the outset. A parent said that her child had deep-seated attachment issues and would not leave her side. Through extended days and patience and understanding from the staff, this parent's child decided when she wanted to start staying overnight. The child 'has not looked back'. The parent said, 'She's a completely different child who I can now take out to the park, and she will go off and play.'

School attendance for residential children is excellent. The head of care and residential staff support children in school when needed. They complete key-work sessions with children during the school day. This helps with reintegration to the classroom for children who struggle to manage their emotions in lessons.

Parents said that the residential provision has given their children opportunities to learn independence skills and the ability to manage thoughts and feelings in a safe way. This has enabled children to manage situations in the community, and with their peers, that they previously would not have been able to. Children go swimming, bowling and other activities which gives them the opportunity to socialise with others.

Research-based practice and specific models of care are implemented by residential and school staff. Training is high on the agenda to ensure that staff are qualified to meet the needs of children with very complex needs. Children are clearly at the centre of the practice in the residential provision.

The residential provision is well presented. Children are involved in choosing what they want in their bedrooms, which are highly personalised to children's tastes and preferences. Artwork by children is proudly displayed around the provision.

Since the last inspection, there has been a decline in referrals to the residential provision from the local authority. Three children are due to move on from the residential provision due to their age at Easter. The other child will stop using the provision, which will then close for the foreseeable future.

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

Safeguarding of children is a high priority in the school and residential provision. Staff have a solid understanding of how to raise concerns. The culture of openness and the encouragement that staff are given to challenge, irrespective of hierarchy, increases the potential for concerns to be shared. When concerns are identified, the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) promptly share these with the appropriate agencies and seek advice appropriately. When advice is given, it is followed. There is also good evidence that the DSLs are extremely proactive in challenging decisions made by professionals if they feel these are not in the best interest of the child.

The safeguarding manager and the safeguarding governor complete annual audits, which feed into the local safeguarding board's audits. This robust approach contributes to a positive safeguarding culture in the residential provision.

Staff undertake a range of safeguarding training, including training around exploitation, radicalisation and online safety. Their learning and understanding are assessed, evaluated and discussed in supervision and staff meetings. Consequently, staff are well equipped to promote the safety of the residential children.

There is excellent practice and evidence about promoting the emotional health and well-being of pupils. The head of care is trained as a mental health practitioner, and she is able to support both children and parents. This has been evident with the support that children were provided with regarding their fears around the pandemic.

Staff physically intervene with children only when it is to ensure their immediate safety. This gives a powerful message to children that they have autonomy over their actions. Staff and children work together to develop and improve children's self-awareness by giving them the support to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Staff prepare risk assessments for activities and trips that are pertinent to the children involved. Staff make use of their detailed knowledge of the children to minimise risks. As a result of such detailed planning, children take part in a wide variety of activities that are safe and enrich their experiences.

Children say that they can talk to staff if they are worried or upset and that staff would help them. An independent listener visits once a term, and the governors

complete detailed monitoring reviews that involve speaking to the children. Children can raise worries or requests by using the speak-up boxes which are placed around school and the residential provision. Staff follow up any concerns with key-work sessions to work through the child's worry.

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

The senior managers in school and the residential provision provide highly effective and efficient leadership. There is an established ethos and culture of collaborative working that supports the children to progress in school and residential.

Senior leaders inspire members of staff and act as positive role models. They are available to the staff for advice and support and value the staff's opinions. Because of this approach, children are cared for by staff who feel valued and are invested in the school.

Senior leaders use a range of tools for monitoring all aspects of the school and residential. Leaders know where changes are required. They act swiftly to improve the experiences and progress of children. Children consistently receive the care and support they need. As a result, they make considerable progress from their starting point.

Staff gain feedback from children through house meetings, questionnaires, independent person's reports and through general conversations with children. Governors visit the children in the residential provision, spending time talking to and gaining their views. Children can express their views in a way which is meaningful and comfortable to them. Staff action children's wishes in their development of the residential provision.

The staff are clearly proud of the school and residential provision, and this is replicated by the children. The children are courteous and polite to visitors and are eager to show them around and get them to join in residential activities.

Staff receive regular supervision which is recorded and signed by staff. There are clear discussions regarding the children, practice, training, and staff development. The staff have the appropriate qualifications to work in the residential provision.

Staffing levels are suitable and sufficient to meet the children's needs. The children receive support from staff who themselves feel thoroughly supported. Children and staff's well-being and mental health are taken seriously. The head of care provides staff with training in how to support children's mental health. As a result, staff are well equipped to respond to children's mental health needs. This was particularly useful during the peak of the pandemic, with support being provided to children and their families.

Parents say that communication between them, the school and residential is excellent, and they are kept fully updated regarding any issues in relation to their

child. A parent said that if her child is struggling in residential or has an incident, the child is given the opportunity to phone home, which helps calm her down. This supports children to manage their emotions.

## **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:** SC038726

**Executive Headteacher:** Neil Toplass

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01543 480369

**Email address:** [neil.toplass@shenstonelodge.co.uk](mailto:neil.toplass@shenstonelodge.co.uk)

## **Inspector**

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

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