

# Swalcliffe Park School

Swalcliffe, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 5EP

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this residential special school**

This residential special school provides education and residential care for up to 31 resident students, aged from 10 to 19, with autism.

There were 23 students living in three houses during the inspection.

The provider is a registered charity.

### **Inspection dates: 27 to 29 February 2024**

**Overall experiences and progress of students and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well students 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 students and young people.

**Date of previous inspection:** 21 February 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Students thrive by accessing the residential provision in the school. They receive warm and nurturing care and support from the dedicated team of staff, who feel privileged to support students to succeed. One member of staff said, 'The school places students at the centre, and it's somewhere value-based where I can make a positive difference.' Parents are equally enthusiastic, saying, 'The school has changed not only our child's life, but our family's life beyond question.'

The Quality of Life (QoL) ethos is firmly embedded. Students attending the residential provision develop socially and emotionally to ensure that they are ready for their next steps. Through developing their independence and social skills, residential students learn to not only care for themselves but also be part of a group, with some making friends for the first time in their lives.

Students' and families' relationships with their dedicated key worker are exceptional. This helps staff to set aims and goals for their future. The key worker role is integral to the success of the QoL approach. Parents' feedback about staff is special. One parent said, 'I cannot fault them... They have gone way above and beyond, and I know this was the best decision [for their child to attend].'

The way students interact with each other reflects the positivity created by the staff team across the school and in the residential houses. The vast range of activities are tailored to students' needs and likes. These include volleyball, rock climbing and a particular favourite, 'Greenpower', where students build kit cars and attend races with several other schools. This supports students to build self-esteem and confidence.

The multi-disciplinary team works seamlessly across the provision to provide a truly joined-up approach. Students benefit from the holistic approach to meeting their physical, emotional and mental well-being needs. The whole team of staff provide an essential service to ensure that students continue to flourish.

Students are actively involved in their care planning, and their voices are listened to. This is a key strength throughout their boarding experience. Students are involved in projects and events, and their memories are beautifully captured in memory books. Students all feel safe and relaxed in their houses; fun and laughter are shared, and friendships are made. One student said, 'The activities are the best.' Another student said, 'I've made friends,' and one student who recently joined the residential provision reported that his overall experience was 'brilliant' and that the school 'is like paradise'.

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

Students feel safe. They approach staff with any worries or concerns, and staff are attuned to each student's physical and emotional needs. Staff are confident in the process to follow should they be concerned for a student's welfare, and they know each student's nuances and recognise small changes in their behaviour.

The safeguarding approach in the school is exemplary. Vigorous measures are used when serious incidents are reported, and the thorough risk assessing processes assure students' safety. The school has exceptional processes to work with other agencies to help keep students safe.

Staff recognise all behaviour as a form of communication and seek to understand what students are trying to express. Behaviour support plans are child-centred and individualised. They support staff to understand students' needs and ensure that they are comprehensively met.

Health and safety monitoring arrangements are fastidious. All checks are completed as required with strong management scrutiny. There are excellent individualised plans in line with students' needs and their understanding of emergency evacuation procedures and danger. Students are protected from unsuitable people working in the school through the meticulous and thoughtful application of safer recruitment practice, which is further enhanced by social media screening.

Students are supported to learn about a wide range of topics linked to promoting their safety and understanding of the world. For example, they learn about road safety, online exploitation and 'cuckooing' as well as wider issues such as British identity, royalty and hot topics in social media. The ever-changing world outside is brought into the school in this way. Staff work very sensitively with students to help them understand the impact this may have on them and the impact that they can have on the world.

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

Senior leaders provide inspirational leadership and promote a culture and ethos of high aspiration for all students. Staff are supported by leaders and can contact them at any time. Staff receive high-quality and bespoke training to enable them to implement the QoL approach and to meet the specific and ever-changing needs of the students.

Staff in the residential provision report very high levels of job satisfaction, and as a result, staff retention is excellent. The continuity of care this affords greatly benefits students. Staff benefit from regular developmental supervision. This keeps the staff team motivated to provide the best quality care and support possible for students. One member of staff said, 'The boys do so many activities and really seem to thrive

here. I'm pleased to be a part of the residential team, and I think I will stay here until I retire!

There is a strong focus on supporting students to identify their strengths and areas for development. The experience of parents is also a fundamental part of monitoring students' progress. Leaders have high expectations for students' progress but recognise that progress is individual. Unique achievements are celebrated and given the significance that they deserve. One parent said, 'The school is the difference between a life endured and a life enjoyed.'

Leaders have an exceptional knowledge of all the students and regularly review students' progress against their agreed goals and targets. High levels of scrutiny from external professionals ensure a drive for continual improvement. Leaders are always looking for better ways to meet their objectives. Consequently, students receive outstanding care.

There is a comprehensive admissions process. Staff go to great efforts to obtain as much information as possible about prospective students to enable them to make well-informed and evidence-based decisions about whether the provision is right for them. Students and their parents have a clear voice in this, and this is very much valued.

The well-led governing body understands and supports the safeguarding of students. They are highly involved in the decisions made regarding students' educational and care needs. Governors provide strong oversight; they are visible and committed to ensuring high standards. Governors are clear about the approach used in the residential provision and the impact that this has on students' overall progress.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of students 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:** 1266836

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Rob Piner

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Ashley Edwards, Social Care Inspector

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