

Millgate School

Millgate School, 18 Scott Street, Leicester LE2 6DW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Millgate School is a maintained residential special school run by Leicester City Council. It caters for 85 boys aged between 11 and 16 who have emotional, behavioural and/or social difficulties. The school has a residential facility which is currently operating for five nights a week, term time only, and can accommodate up to eight students per night. There are also facilities within the residence for students to attend an extended day provision. The residential accommodation is situated on the first floor of the school.

Inspection dates: 28 February to 1 March 2018

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: 17 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Young people are significantly safer, and have a much better quality of life because of this school. This is particularly significant and impressive given some young people's very complex needs and starting points.
- Many young people who have previously been excluded from schools, and who have been out of education for some years, excel within a short timescale. They make up for lost time and have a brighter future.
- The residence is exceedingly well led. Leaders are passionate about their work and very aspirational. They expect all staff, whatever their role, to be the same. They never lose sight of their opportunity to change each young person's life for the better.
- Staff are extremely dedicated. They are more than willing to work over and above their hours, and at weekends, if necessary. If a young person needs them, they are always there for them.
- Strong community work enables young people to make a positive contribution to their community. Young people, who were at considerable risk of social exclusion, begin to find their place in society.
- Young people don't just learn about empathy, but they experience this first hand. Charity work has a very high profile and young people develop a true understanding of society.
- Very effective work with families helps young people to have a positive family life. This work is far-reaching and can keep families together.
- The school's ethos of respect and kindness teaches young people how to behave well. Young people have reflection time. They can and do talk to staff about any aspect of their life.
- Leaders are very creative with their budget, always making the most of money available. Very strong links with the local community and with business leaders ensure that additional funds are available. There is excellent use of these additional funds, always to benefit young people.
- Work is so impressive that is worthy of sharing with others.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Restraint records could be further improved, to ensure that they contain more detailed information about why the restraint was necessary. (National Minimum Standard 12.1)
- Staff supervision records could be further improved, to demonstrate a greater focus on staff performance and safeguarding young people. (National Minimum

Standard 19.6)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people's lives are 'turned around' because of this school. Young people really enjoy their time in the residence. One young person said: 'This is the highlight of my week.' The residence provision adds significant value to young people's education and to their life in general. Teachers report that the benefits can be seen in the classroom.

The 24-hour curriculum means that young people are still learning while they are enjoying themselves in residence. Young people are taught that there is no ceiling to their potential achievement. Young people improve their social skills, as well as their academic abilities. There are times when key teaching staff work in residence to help young people with homework and exam revision. Recently, the English teacher did a 'sleep in' shift. She made herself available for any young people who needed help to prepare for their English GCSE exam the next day. Staff go out of their way to support young people in every aspect of their education.

Young people, some of whom have been out of education for many years, are all now learning each day. They make excellent progress. They all embrace the very positive ethos of the school. All progress is celebrated. This includes young people's achievements being recognised in the local press. One recent article was about a pupil who, in three years, went from a reading age of five years to passing his GCSEs with flying colours.

Young people learn to respect themselves and others. They have extremely positive relationships with staff, who have a very nurturing approach. Young people know that staff believe in them. This gives them the confidence to be themselves. Young people get to know what it is like to feel special. Initiatives such as 'VIP chairs' enhance the school's award system and motivate young people exceptionally well.

Staff know when a young person is struggling. Their empathetic approach is very much suited to this group of vulnerable boys. Staff are not afraid to tackle more challenging subjects. Young people know that they can speak to staff about anything. They laugh together and cry together. Young people feel very able to tell staff about their innermost feelings. They are confident that staff will give them all the support that they need.

Young people are involved in a rich and varied programme of new experiences and activities. Young people have opportunities to take part in activities that they may not ordinarily have the chance to do. Younger pupils have the opportunity to engage in the initiative '50 things to do before you are 11'.

The school ensures an experiential approach to learning about self and others. The development of empathy is a key area of learning. Staff have helped young people to run an event to help homeless people. They provided a meal in school for 19 homeless people. Young people didn't just learn about empathy, but they saw for

themselves the impact of homelessness on others.

Leaders and staff help young people to realise their place in their family. Creative practice keeps families together and helps young people to rebuild family relationships. Young people who had previously had a sense of social isolation start to feel part of their own community. Staff take young people to clubs and events. Staff watch them play football at weekends if families cannot attend. Young people develop a sense of pride. One senior staff member said: 'We change lives here, that's our daily business.' There are numerous examples of this being the case.

Young people's comments about the school are all overwhelmingly positive. They include: 'I was shy before, and now I am not', and 'I am proud of my school.'

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

Young people are extremely safe during their time in residence and report that they feel safe. They are well protected from unsuitable adults because staff recruitment processes are so thorough. The safety of the building is exceptionally well managed. Even the smallest of repairs is completed quickly. The arrangements for fire protection are very effective.

Staff have a range of strategies to manage behaviour. Their approach is based on understanding the underlying causes of challenging behaviour. Trusting relationships between young people and staff underpin behaviour management approaches. One young person said: 'Teachers accept us as their own and it feels like a family.' There are excellent relationships between staff and young people. A young person described a member of staff as: 'Unbreakable on the outside, but soft as a sponge on the inside.'

Young people get better at managing their own emotions. They learn to feel better about themselves. One young person said: 'I have been kicked out of schools, but here I get along with staff, I don't want to let them down.' Young people openly discuss their behaviour. Young people are given the time and space to reflect on their behaviour. For some, this is the first opportunity they have been given for reflection.

Restraints in residence are uncommon, demonstrating that challenging behaviour is managed in other ways whenever possible. There have been eight restraints since the last inspection. Given the young people's extremely complex behaviour, this is very positive. All young people are absolutely confident that restraint is always the last resort for staff. Young people's behaviour support plans include a succinct summary of each child's views about how best to help them if they are displaying challenging behaviours. This information is taken into account when staff are considering the need for a physical restraint and informs de-escalation practice.

Leaders evaluate all restraints. They are professionally curious. They ask probing questions about why restraint was used. Staff practice is carefully scrutinised. New software systems and internal procedures have been developed to make sure that

evaluation is thorough.

Restraint records are generally good. However, some records lack sufficient detail about the events leading up to the decision to restrain. Records would be improved by staff consistently providing a detailed account. This would also strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of incidents.

Young people who have been involved in high-risk criminal activities in their community have had their lives 'turned around'. They are significantly safer than they were before. Staff have developed very strong community links and work alongside the police. Staff review each young person's history, taking account of previous influences and previous poor role models. This informs their risk reduction strategies. Young people learn that they have the power to change.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

School leaders have maintained very high standards for a number of years. However, they are not complacent. Recent improvements include a new animal care centre and a school dog. A new reading room has also been established.

The director of schools' is an inspiration to the whole school. The young people, staff and parents speak incredibly highly of his passion and determination to make a difference. The drive and enthusiasm of all leaders and staff is a key strength of the school.

Leaders keep abreast of developing research into how to improve young people's lives. Recently, the education director has researched the connection between young people's previous trauma and a lack of physical activity. He has organised a project where some young people will wear fitness bands and have incentives for being more physically active. He is very creative with resources. His excellent links with the local community and local businesses are very apparent. He works hard to keep additional money coming in.

Staff are well trained and exceptionally well supported. One member of staff describes school leaders as 'phenomenal'. Staff understand that they are expected to have the same aspirational attitude as the leaders. They feel proud that this is the case. This sense of aspiration influences young people. They know that they can and should aim high.

Very close monitoring of young people's progress ensures that every opportunity is taken to recognise and reward success. For example, 'good work' emails are sent so that young people can be congratulated at every opportunity. Acts of kindness are particularly celebrated. Staff encourage and model this kindness very well. Expectations are very high, but young people rise to the challenge.

The governing body adds another layer of monitoring. It carefully scrutinises practice. Members of the governing body visit the residence frequently and make it their business to know what is happening in the school.

Young people are influential. They are listened to and have a voice. The student council is instrumental in many changes that take place. Young people feel more and more able to express their views because they see that there is always a positive response.

The education director's work outside the school is far reaching. He writes articles for a national newspaper reflecting on good practice at the school. His articles influence others, who can gain insight into the needs of young people who have very complex emotional difficulties. Locally, the education director has made a positive impact on increasing the number of black and ethnic minority senior leaders in the work. He is committed to equality. This gives a very positive message to young people.

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: SC006452

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Inspector(s)

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