

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 has recently converted to an academy school and is run by Discovery Schools Academy Trust. It caters for children aged between seven and 16 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school has a residential facility that can accommodate up to eight children per night. There are also facilities within the residence for children to attend extended day provision.

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: 16 to 18 November 2021

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: 13 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thoroughly enjoy their residential experience. They particularly enjoy meeting up with friends and the activities they participate in. They get on well with the staff and each other. They are generally well behaved and respectful of themselves, each other and staff. One child said, 'We are a Millgate family.'

Recent research conducted in the school has found that children who access the residential provision are likely to have better levels of attendance and achieve better outcomes than their peers.

Children are very well supported to transition from the school. Most children who leave this school continue into further education or employment.

Leaders have recognised the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and their families, in particular the impact on mental health. As a result of this, leaders have employed an additional counsellor and staff have trained in adult and child mental health so that they can provide the right support.

Children enjoy a range of activities on and off site. They have access to a well-resourced sports hall and a recently completed all-weather football pitch. Children also enjoy walking the trainee therapy dog and helping to look after other animals, such as hens and pigmy goats. They go to local parks and ride on the recently purchased scooters and bicycles. Children are very clear that they must wear protective clothing while riding bicycles and scooters. Children are supported to take managed risks to help them develop self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

The voice of each child is highly valued, and actions are taken as a consequence of listening to children. For example, children asked for bicycles and scooters in the residential provision, and these were purchased. Children visited a local home interior shop to choose new bedding for their rooms in the residential provision. The residential provision is discussed at every school council meeting and children who use the provision are part of the school council.

Children are supported to be healthy. Meals are mostly healthy and nutritious. Fruit is always available, and children thoroughly enjoy the food provided. In the residential provision, children get a good night's sleep, which isn't always possible in their family homes. Having a good night's sleep and a good meal ensures that children are ready for the school day and ready to learn.

Innovative practice, with a focus on mental health, has been carried out. For example, staff delivered podcasts about their own mental health, and children listened. This enabled children to talk about their own mental health. Furthermore, some children participated in a city-wide mental health project. They spoke,

anonymously, about their experiences to help others who may be feeling the same way. Due to the recognised expertise in mental health, one of the school leaders is leading on a national mental health project in schools.

Staff know the children very well. However, care-planning documentation, including risk assessments, does not always provide good, individualised information for staff about each child.

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

Safeguarding children, and supporting the mental health needs of both children and their families, is a clear priority. It is firmly embedded into the ethos of the school.

The system used to record safeguarding concerns for children has been adapted to also reflect their families. Consequently, leaders can now report on issues that impact on adult mental health, health concerns, bereavement and so on. This helps staff to fully support the children and ensure that services and interventions are appropriately targeted.

Leaders and staff have excellent relationships with external professionals and parents, which enables them to support and safeguard children effectively. Leaders strongly advocate for children when they are not receiving the protection or services they require from other safeguarding agencies.

Children are generally well behaved. Their behaviour is well managed because children respond positively to the nurturing and warm approach of staff. Consequently, physical intervention is rarely used in the residential provision and is reducing in use in school. Nevertheless, staff are well trained in de-escalation and restraint techniques. Children say that they have not been hurt during a hold and that staff hold them for the right reasons.

Vetting procedures as part of staff recruitment are robust and help to protect children from the risk of unsuitable adults coming to work at the school.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders are passionate. They are dedicated to supporting children to significantly improve their life chances. They model exceptional practice and ensure that children are at the centre of all decisions. Leaders and managers work alongside families effectively and include them in their plans for the children.

Work during the pandemic has focused on the mental health of children and their families as well as supporting basic needs, such as providing food parcels (taken to every child regardless of their financial status) and help with energy bills.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have clear and dynamic plans to address identified shortfalls and further develop practice. Having an outstanding judgement is a reflection of how hard they have worked to continually improve the service they provide for children.

The board of trustees is new for the school, but already provides excellent oversight. Trustees have an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are strong advocates for the school. Trustees clearly believe that the residential provision is an important part of the school. They know that the school provides significantly better outcomes for children because of the residential provision.

There is a strong commitment from staff towards children, and this was highlighted during pandemic lockdowns and before vaccines were available. There are examples of staff caring for children in the residential provision to ensure that children were safe during the pandemic, while putting themselves at risk. The dedication of staff has helped to keep children safe and provide positive experiences through difficult times.

Senior staff informally visit the residential provision during the evenings. However, there is no formal system to monitor and appraise staff practice. This would support staff in providing consistent care for children.

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

Recommendations

- Review information about children in the residential provision to ensure that staff have good information about children's needs and how to support them.
- Consider a formal process to observe and review staff practice to ensure that leaders have a better understanding of how staff work in order to promote consistency for children. (NMS 13.2)

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: SC006452

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Sara Marsh

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Inspector

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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