

Lexden Springs

Winstree Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 0PZ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Lexden Springs is a community special school. It is a day and residential special school that caters for pupils with special educational needs, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, and autism.

There are 300 pupils on roll. The number of residential pupils is currently 15.

Residential pupils can board between Monday and Friday for up to four nights. The residential provision can accommodate up to 30 children in six purpose-built houses.

The head of care was appointed in September 2019 and has the relevant qualifications and experience.

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

Inspection dates: 20 to 22 May 2025

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	good
---	------

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: 18 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

At the time of the inspection, there were six children staying at the residential setting. The inspector spent time with all children who were present.

Staff have fantastic relationships with the children. Their calm, patient approach means that children trust them and feel comfortable and safe in their company.

Leaders have thoughtfully renamed and designed the residential houses. Murals help children to identify their surroundings when they stay. Staff have created a sensory garden for children to plant flowers and herbs and enjoy the delicate sounds of wind chimes.

Staff support children to maintain excellent attendance in school. Information is shared between the school and residential provision effectively, meaning that the teaching staff are aware of the child's mood and presentation before coming to school. Records are updated and shared with parents regularly to ensure high levels of communication.

Staff ensure that children are kept stimulated and interested in spending time with them. Staff are mindful of children's limitations due to their health needs and provide quieter environments when children need these. This shows that staff are attuned to the children's needs and adapt well to their individual preferences.

Staff make sure that parents visit all areas of the provision. Parents said that recreating low-stimulation areas at home, such as the child's bedroom, has helped the child to calm and have a better night's sleep. This has helped to improve children's energy levels and focus throughout the day.

Children enjoy a wide range of positive experiences with staff and their peers. Staff take the children on enjoyable outings and group activities. These have helped them to integrate socially with each other and cope better in the community. Children have enjoyed trips to light shows, restaurants, petting zoos and several annual events and celebrations.

Staff have redesigned the statement of purpose with support from the children. The children have influenced the features and layout of the children's guide using symbols. There is a very strong approach to gaining children's views and making sure that they are consulted in every aspect of their residential stays.

One parent said, 'Staff are phenomenal! Everything I was hoping for has been achieved and more. Washing hair and bathing was terrifying, now my child is happily having their hair washed and enjoys the bath.' Another parent said, 'Staff push my

child out of their comfort zone, which means they are becoming more independent and less scared to try new things. Staff really help me to help my child.'

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

There is an incredibly strong safeguarding culture at the provision. The managers have provided training to several members of the senior leadership team. This helps to ensure that there are always trained safeguarding practitioners available.

When accidents occur, the staff use highly effective recording procedures to communicate what happened and ensure that the correct action is taken. Learning is gained following incidents. Accidents and incidents are rare. Staff work very closely with the children to keep them safe from any form of harm.

The leadership team provides comprehensive levels of oversight. They scrutinise reports from external bodies as well as internal reports to ensure that matters relating to health and safety are resolved quickly. The head of care attends meetings when any matters are discussed, and timelines are provided for any work being carried out.

Staff use highly effective strategies to prevent children's behaviour from escalating. There have been no incidents of restraint since the last inspection. There have also been no complaints, either internally or externally. Parents say that they are very happy with the quality and consistency of care provided to the children.

Highly effective planning means that there have been no missing-from-care episodes. Each child has a personalised, detailed missing-from-care protocol that is individualised and considers the children's needs and presentation. These are kept under review and changes are made to show when a child's risks reduce and are better understood and managed by staff.

Leaders make sure that staff are upskilled in safeguarding. Time is dedicated to helping staff to support their development in this area. This includes meetings to help night staff understand how to support children in a crisis.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership team has continued to make good progress in the management and oversight of the residential provision. The relationships between leaders are good. They draw on the support from the human resources team to assist with staff training and development.

The leaders provide good levels of managerial oversight. The headteacher spends time with children and staff at weekly meals. The head of care models good practice in the residential provision and works closely with her team.

When there are issues among the team, leaders address these. They implement systems to build a more joined-up way of working, and staff participate in discussions around rotas and working patterns.

Leaders have recently provided resources for staff to share their experiences of the provision using remote electronic surveys. They have supported staff by encouraging the use of electronic apps that promote good physical and emotional health and well-being.

Leaders provide good oversight to make sure that the provision is well maintained and fit for purpose. This is achieved by consistently looking at whether any improvements can be made. Leaders keep the children at the forefront of decisions.

The electronic online policies are not always kept up to date. This means that the parents of children referred do not have up-to-date information about the residential provision, the leadership team and how they are meeting current guidelines.

The previous unmet standards and recommendations from the last inspection have been met.

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

Point for improvement

- Ensure that policies are kept updated and made accessible to those who need to review them online.

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: 2582228

Headteacher: Mrs Jennifer Grotier

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01206 563321

Email address: Jgrotier@lexdenssprings.essex.sch.uk

Inspector

Dan Williams, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025