

LVS Oxford

Spring Hill Road, Begbroke, Oxfordshire, OX5 1RX

Inspection dates

22/02/2017 to 24/02/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Young people make very good progress as a result of accessing the residential provision. They learn how to be away from their families and how to form relationships with others, or at least how to tolerate others around them. Young people are particularly well supported with regard to their physical and emotional well-being. Young people are supported to be themselves and to respect others' differences.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's needs. They understand how each young person communicates and expresses himself or herself, which leads to consistent working during their stays. Young people are prepared for their life after school through a targeted programme of life and social skills via an online system of goals and targets. Joint working with other departments within the school, and with parents and partner agencies, is embedded in practice to ensure the best opportunities and quality of care for young people.
- Young people say they feel safe in the residential setting, and their actions and demeanour suggest that they are comfortable in the staff's company. Staff are acutely aware of each young person's vulnerabilities to all forms of abuse or exploitation and know who to contact should they be concerned.
- Young people have the opportunity to take part in a range of socially and emotionally stimulating activities. Activities include swimming, photography, arts and crafts, and games. Specific skills and talents are celebrated and young people have opportunity to try new experiences they may not have the opportunity to try at home.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that furniture is suitable for the environment and is well maintained.
- Complete a thorough and clear risk assessment on staff working in the school while waiting for their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to be completed.
- Consider how effective the current format is for appraisals, for demonstrating staff skills and responsibilities, and areas for growth and development.
- Review and revise the lone-working policy to ensure that it is robust and fully reflective of the tasks and activities staff undertake with young people accessing the residential provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was announced, via telephone, to the head of the school on the morning of the first day. On the inspector's arrival, an initial meeting was held with the headteacher and the head of care. Inspectors held discussions with residential care staff; the ground keeper and the maintenance manager; therapists (occupational, psychotherapeutic and speech and language) and the chaplain. All residential areas were observed and visited during the inspection. The inspector observed, and when appropriate, took part in activities with residential students in addition to having group and individual discussions with them. Inspectors held telephone discussions with the designated officer in the local authority; trustees; parents; and students who were absent through illness. No questionnaires were received by Ofsted from residential students or staff. A range of documents and records were also examined during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jennie Christopher

lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

LVS Oxford is an independent special school that provides day and residential provision for young people between 11 and 18 years of age who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.

The residential provision offers weekly boarding or flexi-boarding from Monday to Thursday night. The school is situated in a rural location on the outskirts of Oxford. It can accommodate 15 young people on a residential basis and 35 as day students.

The proprietor is the Licensed Trade Charity. The school was first registered in June 2014 and opened in September 2014. The residential provision was judged as good at the last inspection, in January 2016. There were five young people using the residential provision at the time of this visit and three were available to meet.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people make very good progress as a result of accessing the residential provision. They learn how to be away from their families and how to form relationships with others, or at least how to tolerate others around them. Young people are particularly well supported with regard to their physical and emotional well-being. The school's therapy team works closely with partner agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

The safety and well-being of young people is paramount to practice in the residential setting. Young people have some extremely strong relationships with staff and are continuously supported to respect each other's space and differences. Behaviour is managed effectively and there are relatively few incidents of poor behaviour in the residential area.

The head of care and the staff team ensure that the residential provision runs smoothly. There are sufficient staff to enable young people to have time alone with staff or to interact as part of a group. Young people have the opportunity to share their views and ideas on a weekly basis, mostly around which activities they would like to take part in that week. They are also able to decline an activity if they later change their mind. Young people are helped to focus on positive activities and to limit their obsessional or compulsive behaviours. Young people also share their views via the school council.

Staff work effectively with other departments across the school and with external partner agencies. Information sharing is evidenced through meeting minutes and young people's records. Leaders and managers are reflective on the quality of the service provided. The head of care, in particular, seeks to consistently improve the residential provision and make it a homely environment. Joint working among the stable staff team ensures that young people benefit from consistent and high-quality care.

The residential accommodation is airy and spacious. It is well maintained and decorated and young people appear comfortable and confident in their environment. However, the sofas are not adequate for the amount of wear and tear that adolescents subject them to, and are damaged and some springs have broken.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Staff have an excellent understanding of each young person's needs. They understand how each young person communicates and expresses himself or herself. Young people are prepared for their life after school through a targeted programme of life and social skills via an online system of goals and targets. Joint working with other departments within the school, and with parents and partner agencies, is embedded in practice to ensure the best opportunities and quality of care for young people.

All young people are treated with dignity and respect. Individualised plans identify their preferences, likes and dislikes, and people who are important to them. Young people are

able to personalise their bedrooms and bring items from home. Young people are supported extremely well by staff to explore who they are. Such as when they may be conflicted or confused about their emotions, where they fit in, or their sexuality. The therapy team and chaplain are well respected across the school community. Young people access these staff members as they wish in order to work through how they are feeling about themselves, their diagnosis or any number of concerns impacting on adolescent lives. Where the staff do not feel they have the skills to manage an individual's needs, they will seek outside specialist support from services such as CAMHS. A psychotherapist is employed and is available one day per week.

Young people are supported to be themselves and to respect others' differences. Displays around the residential area show how different cultural events have been celebrated, such as Chinese New Year. The displays also explore citizenship, democracy and the recent USA election. Young people's individuality is also recognised through a peacock display where their good deeds and small steps are celebrated on each feather.

Young people have the opportunity to take part in a range of socially and emotionally stimulating activities, with plans being agreed weekly. Activities include swimming, photography, arts and crafts, and games. Young people will often change their plans at short notice and this is accommodated as best as possible. Specific skills and talents are celebrated, such as photography, playing musical instruments, and art. Young people have the opportunity to try new experiences they may not have the opportunity to try at home. One young person spoke at length about his photography and showed photographs demonstrating his love of cars. Staff were amazed at how far he has moved on, as he would never have had the confidence to speak to a stranger for that length of time before.

Young people are supported to understand what a healthy lifestyle is, and what this means for them. The nurse and therapy team work closely with residential staff to ensure that speech and language and occupational therapy plans are followed in the residential setting. Food is of a very high standard and is freshly made on site. Young people develop cooking skills and source fresh ingredients.

Plans are current and staff know how to respond to young people's emotional emergencies or self-injurious behaviour. Individual plans are of a high standard. They identify each young person's needs and how staff will meet these. Progress is recorded through a variety of means, and successes, no matter how small, are always celebrated. Plans are reviewed regularly and after any significant changes in behaviour or skills. Medication is appropriately stored and administered.

Young people can contact their parents via their mobile phones or a phone in the residential area. Parents and young people are positive about the provision. Comments include: 'Staff do a fantastic job in often difficult circumstances'; and, 'He is learning new skills which benefit him, like cooking.'

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Young people say they feel safe in the residential setting, and their actions and demeanour suggest that they are comfortable in the staff's company. Staff are acutely

aware of each young person's vulnerabilities to all forms of abuse or exploitation, and know who to contact should they be concerned. Staff know who the designated safeguarding lead is and who deputises in her absence.

Young people are all able to identify staff they would go to if they were worried or upset, and also know that they can contact the independent visitor at any time. They feel that staff listen to them and respect them. If problems arise, staff use their knowledge of individual young people to work through them. There have been no complaints in the residential provision, and those in other areas of the school are thoroughly investigated.

Staff work closely with external protection agencies and report any concerns. Staff know they can go directly to the local safeguarding children's team if they feel their concern is not being managed effectively in school or if they cannot contact the safeguarding lead in school. The designated safeguarding lead follows up referrals with rigour. Key staff attend team around the family and multi-agency meetings away from the school, and ensure that any changes in behaviour or demeanour are shared with partner agencies. Those who may self-injure have solid response plans in place; staff understand their roles and how to respond should an incident occur. Risk assessments are up to date and regularly reviewed. They contain all the relevant information and how to mitigate risk.

Pre-placement planning is effective and considers the likelihood of a young person going missing. It is recognised that the site is not secure for young people who have a history of going missing and those individuals are not placed in the school. Consequently, young people do not go missing. Staff understand that each young person is vulnerable to exploitation in all forms and continue to educate them in the risks of this.

Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's behaviour and what it may be communicating. They work closely with the behaviour team as well as the therapy team to ensure consistency of approach. Young people know what is expected of them. Those who understand the notion of sanctions are involved in the process and are encouraged to read and sign any measures imposed. Restraint has not been used in the residential setting since the last inspection. All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques, as well as understanding the specific diagnosis and behaviours most relevant to this setting.

E-safety is at the forefront of staff thinking and of the dangers posed by internet use. Young people are monitored and the topic is regularly discussed in both the residential provision and the school. In addition, young people learn about keeping safe, relationships and consent.

Staff recruitment processes are mostly robust. However, risk assessments are poor for staff who are working, but whose Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate has not arrived. The form is muddled and does not sufficiently justify the decision to allow them to work in advance of receiving the certificate.

The lone-working policy is not fully reflective of the amount of time staff may be alone with young people and the risks posed by the activities or tasks they may be undertaking.

The trustee charged with safeguarding is fastidious in her approach to monitoring safeguarding within the school. She has undertaken training appropriate to her role and

is confident in challenging the senior leadership team on any matters she feels have not been managed effectively.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The residential provision is effectively and efficiently led by a head of care with many years' experience of working in residential special schools. The senior leadership team has extremely high, yet realistic, expectations for all young people who attend the school. The team has excellent oversight of the progress young people in the residential setting are making. Regular meetings between members of the the leadership team ensure that information is shared effectively, young people's progress is monitored and new targets and goals are set. The head of care additionally produces a development plan to highlight areas of the service that require review or improvement.

The residential provision is adequately staffed. Personnel either hold, or are working towards, a level 3 qualification in residential child care. Staff feel they are well supported. They have access to relevant training, and to refresher training on a weekly basis. They are also confident in approaching members of the therapy team if they require further guidance on how to support and develop the skills of young people. Young people are central to all planning and there are suitable staffing levels in order for young people to undertake various activities. Most evenings, staff from school are also available to facilitate extra-curricular activities.

There was one national minimum standard identified as being unmet at the last inspection, regarding monitoring of the residential provision. This has now been fully met. Visitors who monitor the provision include trustees and the head of care from a local residential special school. The head of care comments that she finds this particularly useful and that she regularly meets with heads of care from other schools in the region to share good practice. Other areas identified at the last inspection as requiring improvement have also been met.

All staff receive regular supervision and they feel able to approach the head of care at any time with any worries or concerns. They feel they work well as a team and that all are listened to. Annual appraisals of individual performance are basic and focus on training for the coming year. They lack the detail of individual staff responsibilities and how they can develop their practice beyond training. The head of care recognises this, and adds some of this detail into supervision records. She is keen to improve the appraisal format, which is organisation wide.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	141208
Social care unique reference number	SC479872
DfE registration number	931/6015

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	5
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to19
Headteacher	Louisa Allison-Bergin
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/01/2016
Telephone number	01865 595170
Email address	enquiries@lvs-oxford.org.uk

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