

# Cloughwood Academy

Cloughwood Academy, Stones Manor Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1NU  
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Cloughwood Academy is a purpose-built day and residential special academy. It is located within extensive grounds on the Mid Cheshire Campus in Hartford. The academy caters for male pupils between the ages of eight and 18 years. There are currently 64 pupils on roll. The academy provides extended days and residential places during term time. This does not include weekends or holidays.

**Inspection dates:** 11 to 13 December 2018

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 7 February 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Young people, parents and professionals say that this is an excellent service where young people grow, become confident and make progress in all areas of their lives.
- Young people enjoy spending time with their friends. One young person said, 'I live a long way away, so it is great to see my friends from school and do activities with them.'
- Young people have a strong relationship with members of staff and talk openly about their feelings, concerns and wishes. Therefore, the young people's voices are clearly heard and they can influence the development of the service.
- Young people enjoy a wide range of activities that help them to improve their social skills, to learn new things and to have fun.
- Parents said that they felt valued because they are included in all aspects of their child's care.
- The staff team consists of several long-standing staff. This means that the young people receive a consistent level of care. Staff have regular supervision and effective training. Therefore, they have the skills to support young people well.
- External monitoring by the independent visitor is excellent. They identify areas for improvement and contact the board of governors to ensure that any identified action has been carried out.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Records are not clear because some records have not been signed or dated. Further to this, times have been omitted from some essential records, such as records of restraint and sanctions.
- Young people's risk assessments have improved since the last inspection. However, all the young people have been assessed for numerous things, such as using the all-weather pitch, going on activities and being in the day lounge. For most of the young people, there is no history of any incidents in these areas. Therefore, risk assessments do not address individual needs.
- Good practice would mean sharing any potential serious safeguarding concerns with Ofsted. This would ensure that all parties are working together to safeguard young people.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that all records are signed and dated by the author. Further to this, ensure that records reflect the time of the event.
- Further improve young people's risk assessments so that they accurately reflect the individual needs of young people.
- As well as following local safeguarding procedures, best practice would be to share information with Ofsted.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people can stay for up to two nights in the week, have extended evenings or a combination of both. Young people described their time in the residential setting in very positive terms. For example, one young person said, 'It is awesome.' A parent said, 'It has given my son a social life and he is now more willing to try new things.'

Each young person has a care plan. This is drawn up by the young person's key worker and school teacher. This is then sent home for the young person and parents to add any additional detail and to comment on. As a result, everybody is included in the young person's care.

Young people complete a separate document called 'All about me'. This describes how best to support them, their likes and dislikes, their fears and what they want to accomplish. Therefore, staff know the young people well. They understand what may cause young people to become upset and they understand how to intervene to reduce their anxieties. Staff use this knowledge to plan and to prepare for overnight stays. For example, one young person does not like loud noises and he stays with a quieter group. Careful consideration is given to young people's friendship groups in school and, where possible, staff try to match these groups during overnight stays.

Young people said that they have excellent relationships with members of staff. One young person said, 'I can talk about anything, bad or good. I do not bottle things up now and this has helped me to be more relaxed.' The school has a school counsellor. A young person suggested that they should have a residential counsellor and the staff thought that this was a good idea. The young people nominated representatives and they have had several meetings. One suggestion was to have a complaint and grumble box and a compliment tree. There have been no complaints, but young people use the tree to say thank you or praise staff for things that they do for them. In addition to this, the independent visitor regularly talks to the young people about their care, worries and achievements. This means that they have several avenues to raise a concern, if necessary.

The quality of the partnership between the provider and health professionals is good. Residential pupils have access to a drop-in clinic operated by the school nurse. This provides a confidential space for them to talk about any physical or emotional health problems, such as sexual health, healthy eating and lifestyle choices. Staff complete regular training and updates on a range of medical conditions, such as epilepsy, diabetes and asthma. Some young people take regular medications. There are robust systems to store and administer these. As a result, the young people receive their medication in line with their prescription.

Young people have excellent attendance at school. They are learning and making progress. The residential provision links closely with school and activities are often chosen to enhance their learning or skills. For example, some young people have

little concentration skills and their reading level needs to be improved. Therefore, they have a homework club where the young person receives individual attention in a quiet area to complete these tasks.

Young people engage in a range of activities in the community, such as going to the cinema, to play centres, swimming and going to the park. The school has an all-weather pitch which the young people can use for football or basketball. Staff also find areas for broadening young people's horizons. For example, the young people visited a Buddhist monk and listened to his teachings. They were able to ask questions and to look around the setting. One young person later told his mother that he really enjoyed this and that he thought that meditation would be good for him. Staff reported that the young person went into the sensory room that evening and sat quietly for an hour. The young person said, 'I found it strangely comforting being with my own thoughts.' This shows that young people are learning and benefiting from embracing other cultures.

Numerous parents said that independence skills are an area that the provision excels at. Young people are involved in a 'Let's cook' programme. A parent said, 'He is cooking things there that I would not have normally let him do at home. His confidence is improving daily.' A young person said, 'I make a mean (good) lasagne.' In addition to this, young people's personal hygiene has significantly improved. Young people are now showering independently, and they are taking pride in their appearance. At the end of term, each young person is given an award. This includes being the best cook, best behaved, best singer, best new comer and best story teller. Young people said that it was great to be complimented for something that they do well.

The physical environment gives ample space and facilities for the young people to have fun and to stay in comfort. An empty lounge has been made into a sensory room and the young people enjoy spending time in there. Each young person has their own bedroom and they have personalised them with posters, photographs and artwork. The young people comment positively on the sleeping accommodation. They report being comfortable, feeling safe and sleeping well.

Parents are unanimous in their praise for the quality of the care provided to their children when they are staying in the residential provision. Communication is excellent, and parents feel that staff listen and respond to any issues or concerns that they raise. They describe staff as being caring and welcoming and report that staff display an extremely good understanding of their child's needs.

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

The designated safeguarding lead for the residential provision is the vice principal of the school. He is new to the role, but he is fully trained in safeguarding issues. He has excellent oversight of welfare issues across the school. He is visible and accessible to staff and residential pupils. He has a good oversight of safeguarding practice and he knows the young people well.

The designated safeguarding officer gave positive feedback about the school's approach to safeguarding. He said that his relationship with the school was positive and that the school's engagement with him was good. There have been three consultations and six referrals this year. They have all been unfounded or unsubstantiated. The vice principal followed the school safeguarding procedures when they were alerted of a potential serious safeguarding concern. However, good practice would have been to inform Ofsted, so that all parties are working together to keep young people safe.

Staff have clear risk assessments and safety plans to reduce the risk of harm to young people. Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures because they have regular training in numerous topics, such as safeguarding and the risks around radicalisation, county lines and child sexual exploitation. They are alert to risks presented by the internet. In the evening, young people are allowed one hour on their mobiles, iPad or consoles and then they hand them in to staff. Staff supervise them, and parental controls are in place. Young people accept this and cooperate. This means that young people are not spending lots of time in their rooms and playing on their gadgets in the night. A member of staff said, 'A lot of our young people have poor social skills and isolate themselves. This hour allows them to keep in touch with people or play a game, but the restriction also allows them to join in activities or to be part of the group.' A parent said, 'This has been fantastic. He was so isolated and preferred to be in his room. He is now out enjoying himself.'

Young people are considerate of each other's needs and have gained an understanding of how their behaviours affect others. This is evident in the significant reduction of restraints this year. When young people are held for their safety, staff and young people are debriefed. This means that everyone can reflect and learn from the incident.

Young people have not gone missing from the provision. Members of staff are aware that there is the potential for this to happen. They have a clear understanding of the process to take, if an incident was to occur.

Staff working in the residential provision and teachers in school are thoroughly vetted to ensure that they are of a good character and suitable to work with vulnerable young people. The recruitment procedure has been enhanced because references are obtained from the last employer and from individual referees. All visitors to the residence are required to sign in, to show identification and are supervised while in the setting. This further protects young people.

The residential provision is maintained well and is regularly inspected to ensure that it is safe. Young people now regularly practise fire drills, staff undertake fire marshal training and all fire equipment is properly serviced and maintained. In addition to this, young people complete a fire safety questionnaire to improve their understanding of fire safety. The deputy head of care makes use of the independent and external reports to maintain high standards of health and safety. She takes

prompt action to address any identified risks.

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

The head of care has been unavailable for work since March 2018. A deputy head of care has been overseeing the residence in his absence. She has been working closely with the principal to ensure that the residence runs smoothly. She has made several changes that have enhanced the provision, such as the residents counsel, the sensory room and a compliments tree. The young people's files are now in a good order. She has also made contact with a college and staff are offered a range of additional training to support their development.

The deputy head of care is well respected by her colleagues, parents and professionals. One described her as 'a breath of fresh air'. Without exception, all commented positively on her knowledge and professionalism. She understands the young people well because she works alongside staff. She works closely with parents and the school to provide the best possible, all-round support for young people to flourish.

Staff appreciate the support that they receive from the deputy head of care. She is accessible and approachable and regularly consults with staff on matters of service and strategies to care for the young people. She creates a safe environment for staff to openly discuss problems and areas of challenge. She takes effective action to manage performance and gives clear direction to staff in terms of the expected standards of care. As a result, staff feel trusted to carry out their roles and work effectively as a team.

There is a core group of long-standing staff, with one new member of staff. Most of the staff have a relevant childcare qualification and the new member of staff is registered on an equivalent course. Staff meetings are held at the beginning of the week. This gives them time to reflect on the past week and to look ahead to the forthcoming week. Staff said that they receive regular supervision and that they discuss their practice, training needs and development. Therefore, staff are supported to care well for young people.

The deputy head of care closely monitors the quality of the service and the care provided to the young people. She makes good use of feedback from others to inform the service development. This includes the views from staff, parents, young people and other professionals. She acts promptly in response to feedback from the independent visitor.

The deputy head of care completes a self-assessment on the service provided. It is an excellent document for demonstrating how the service is monitored, what improvements have been made and what requires further development. For example, she has used the social care common inspection framework to assess each judgement area and to develop an action plan to get the service to outstanding in the future.

The school governors play an active role in the residence provision. They evaluate the residence through monitoring reports, complaints and safeguarding incidents. They provide a supportive role and a constructive challenge to the deputy head of care to maintain high standards and to drive continuous improvement.

External monitoring of the residence is excellent. The independent visitor talks to young people and parents and he visits the residence. If he makes any recommendations for the service, he telephones to make sure that they have been actioned. For example, he raised an issue around there being no first aid kits in the residence and that this put staff and young people at risk. Immediate action was taken to address this.

Young people's records have improved. The files have been restructured and old information has been archived. This means that staff have access to the most relevant paperwork. However, some documents have not been signed and dated by the author. In addition to this, some records, such as the sanction book, do not have the time of the incident filled in.

## **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:** SC006625

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Adrian Larkin

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01606 288090

**Email address:** [head@cloughwood.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:head@cloughwood.cheshire.sch.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Pam Nuckley, social care regulatory inspector (lead)  
Chris Scully, social care regulatory inspector



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