

# 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 children aged between eight and 18 years.

There are currently 118 children on roll. The academy provides extended days and residential places during term time. There are eight residential places with 19 children accessing the provision from Monday to Thursday.

A head of care oversees the residential provision. She is appropriately experienced and qualified.

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

### Inspection dates: 21 to 23 January 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 **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 February 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children accessing this residential provision continue to make outstanding progress. The overall experience of their residential stays and the excellent quality of care have an exceedingly positive impact on the lives of each child. They are well supported to develop their own identities and personalities, achieve familiar and stable routines and plan positively for their future. Consequently, children are making excellent social, personal and academic progress.

Relationships between children and staff are exceptionally strong. These are sensitive, respectful and nurturing. Staff use these relationships to encourage children to identify their own goals and to help them understand how these link to their educational targets. Residency is a clear extension of the school curriculum, and this service supports children's academic progress.

Inductions for children into the provision are carefully planned. Staff make sure that they understand children's needs and that they will fit in well with the children already accessing the provision. Children are nurtured and supported at a pace in line with their ability to cope with change, and this leads to successful transitions and an atmosphere of mutual support.

The residential provision is a fully integrated and valued part of the school. Detailed records show how each child has thrived, both academically and with their social and life skills. Each child receives tailored support aimed at their level of confidence and understanding. Staff encourage and enable children to develop their independence, and they give extra support to those who need it. One parent told the inspector, 'Spending time in residential has worked wonders with my son; he is now confident and much more independent.'

Staff provide an excellent level of support to ensure that children's health and well-being needs are met. Specialist staff provide them with tools and strategies for coping with their concerns and worries. These approaches are shared with residential staff to ensure that there is a consistent approach, and the support is available across the school. When necessary, referrals are made to external agencies to obtain specialist input for children.

Meaningful day-to-day discussions and children's meetings help children to explore their behaviours and emotions. The views of children are valued and are central to the operation of the residential provision. The head of care and residential staff are excellent advocates. Children have an independent listener who visits them, as well as a link individual from the Trust.

There are effective planning processes for the children accessing the residential provision. Each child has an individual plan that sets achievable targets that are

focused on the child's personal and social development needs. These plans link to targets in children's individual education, health and care plans. The children are fully involved in developing these plans, and there is a strong commitment to ensuring that the child's views are thoroughly considered when agreeing support strategies.

Staff make good use of the on-site facilities to ensure that children can take part in activities that they find comforting and enjoyable. Children also have access to a wide range of community-based activities, which allows them to fully explore their talents and interests. This means that the residential provision is a stimulating and exciting environment for children. This supports them to develop the social, emotional and cognitive skills that will help them to move towards adulthood.

Meals provided by the school are balanced, nutritious and really good quality. Choice is actively promoted, and specific diets are catered for. This ensures that the range of food caters to children's individual needs and preferences, some of which relate to their allergies or religious preferences.

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

The school's safeguarding team has a strong and consistent approach to safeguarding children. The electronic system for recording concerns provides an effective audit trail that demonstrates how procedures have been followed and how practice is reviewed. Staff know how to raise concerns or worries about children, and leaders ensure that they respond immediately.

The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable about the risks that children face. Staff respond swiftly to all safeguarding concerns. Action is individualised and based on the significant knowledge that staff have about the children in their care. Communication with other agencies is very good. Staff challenge professionals when the response to a child is not good enough. Staff, including the designated safeguarding lead, are tenacious. They ensure that the child's lived experience is at the forefront of decision-making. For some children, their lives are improved immeasurably because of the stance that staff take.

Comprehensive risk assessments form part of children's care plans. These risk assessments enable staff to minimise and manage risk. If a child's needs change, new information becomes available or new behaviours emerge, the risk assessments are updated. High-quality monitoring and supervision of children contribute to the fact that they do not leave the site without permission. This means children can take managed risks and develop their skills and independence.

Staff are adept at noticing changes in children's presentation and behaviour. They recognise that those changes may indicate that children need additional help and advice, and possibly protection from harm. Consequently, staff are providing exceptional support that safeguards children.

Staff know the children extremely well, which means that children benefit from a consistent approach to behaviour. A nurturing approach is used by staff, which supports children to reflect on their own behaviours. This helps children to develop resilience and informs them to be able to make safer choices as they progress. Because of this approach, there has been a reduction in the use of physical intervention, and children are developing their own behaviour management strategies.

The monitoring of health and safety and actions taken to maintain the school building and grounds are effective and timely. Staff undertake fire safety checks at required intervals and conduct emergency evacuation drills in residential time.

Detailed recruitment and vetting procedures keep children safe. All visitors to the school and residence are required to sign in and are appropriately supervised on site. Visitors cannot move around the settings independently, and an electronic release mechanism protects internal and external doors. These systems assist in providing a safe environment for children

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

Children benefit greatly from their residential experiences because the provision's stated function and purpose translate into an exceptionally well-run service. The residential provision has a strong record of delivering high-quality care and building on children's achievements and progress made in school. The head of care provides clear leadership that shapes a child-focused approach that is applied in the work of the whole team. The head of care is well supported by the residential team, which actively contributes to the provision's successful operation. This whole-school approach helps to influence and secure improvements that positively benefit all children.

Staff feel well supported by leaders, managers and each other. Staff are confident to approach senior managers to discuss any problems or ideas for the development of the residential provision. Staff feel valued and listened to and see themselves as a cohesive team across all aspects of the school. There are seamless links between care and education teams which promote effective communication about children's needs. Support workers are present in class, which promotes the sharing of practices and ideas.

Staff receive regular supervision and effective support from managers to improve their practice and their support for children, with a sharp focus on safeguarding and promoting their well-being.

Training and development of staff are a high priority to ensure that all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to support children effectively and promote positive outcomes. Staff have opportunities to ensure that they keep up to date with good practice developments and undertake training to extend their competence to meet the complex needs of children. All staff are required to achieve the level 3 diploma in

residential childcare. The induction, personal development programme and supervision systems ensure that staff understand their roles, have clear objectives and receive training to support children's progress and achievement.

The governing body is highly committed to the children. Governors' knowledge of the school, and the challenges it faces, is extensive. Governors recognise the value of the residential provision; not only the impact it has on children's educational progress but also the significant impact it has on children and their families' lives.

Despite the excellent progress, leaders continue to strive to make improvements in the care and education that children receive. There is good research used to enhance the learning experience for children. Since the last inspection, leaders have introduced a new assessment tool to measure individual children's adaptive skills during their school journey. Furthermore, leaders are creative and always looking for ways to engage children and improve their communication. This commitment and passion help the service to grow and get even better.

Parents and professionals are uniformly positive about the service and can readily identify the impact the residential provision has had on children's lives. Communication between staff and parents is excellent and indicative of the positive relationships that exist. There are clear lines of accountability that are further enhanced by effective oversight by the school's senior leadership team. The residential service is seen as an integral part of the school, which consistently provides further opportunities for children to develop personally and socially.

## **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:** SC006625

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Robert Newton

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01606 537690

**Email address:** head@cloughwood.cheshire.sch.uk

## **Inspectors**

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Stacey Ilaboya, Social Care Inspector

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