

# Southview School

Conrad Road, Witham, Essex CM8 2TA

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Southview School is a day and residential special school in Witham that caters for pupils with complex physical and neurological disabilities. The school is a member of the Hope Learning Trust. The residential accommodation is in a purpose-built building in the school grounds.

The school has up to 10 residential places. Pupils can stay for up to four nights a week. At the time of the inspection, there were 108 pupils on school roll, of whom four were accessing the residential provision full time and one part time.

The residential lead has been in post since September 2023 and has a relevant qualification.

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

### Inspection dates: 25 and 26 November 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:** 5 November 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

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

The atmosphere in the residential setting is heartwarming. Staff have created a safe and supportive environment in which children can truly be themselves. Laughter is shared between children and staff, who enjoy one another's company. Children speak highly of the staff and appear fully at ease in their surroundings. They move freely around the residence, making drinks and snacks, and interact warmly with their peers.

The approach to children's care is well coordinated. During the first week of term, care staff spend time in the classroom learning about children's needs. Staff have access to professionals with expertise in speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. This equips staff with the confidence and skills needed to support children's complex needs around the clock in the residence. When additional help is required, these professionals extend their support seamlessly into the residential provision.

Staff use a wide range of effective communication approaches that reflect each child's preferred communication style. Staff skilfully adapt their methods to ensure that every child can express their views and fully participate in daily life. As a result, children feel listened to, understood and are well supported by the dedicated staff.

Children receive exceptional, child-centred care from the dedicated and nurturing staff team. Children are supported by adults who they trust, and together they take part in activities that they genuinely enjoy. Children have a wide range of enriching experiences, including access to the hydrotherapy pool and an interactive room. This broadens their experience and enables them to enjoy opportunities they may not otherwise have.

Staff are deeply committed to the children and consistently go the extra mile for them and their families. They spend time with parents and carers in the lead-up to a child's stay to help reduce any anxieties. One parent said, 'Staff are a great asset, I do not know where I would be without them.'

There is a strong and consistent focus on preparing children for adulthood. This supports parents to feel confident and well prepared as their children move towards greater independence. The school also hosts an annual multi-agency event, giving families direct access to further guidance and support.

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

The approach to safeguarding is extremely thorough. The safeguarding lead is highly knowledgeable about the risks that children may face. The wider safeguarding team

and staff are well informed about strategies to reduce these risks. The safeguarding lead routinely analyses data from incidents, accidents and injuries. Where necessary, they make adaptations to children's care plans with specialist teams.

Every child's risk is closely monitored by staff. Safeguarding children is treated as a 24-hour responsibility. Staff understand the importance of monitoring children closely during the night. To manage children's worries about who will care for them while they sleep, photos of staff are displayed in a child's bedroom as a reminder of who will be caring for them overnight.

Safety plans clearly focus on each child's individual risks and are easy to follow. They cover all aspects of a child's care, such as personal care, and their mobility needs. This ensures that children's needs are met in the safest and most dignified way possible.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe through creative activities with staff and group sessions with the local police officer. They learn about stranger danger and online safety. This helps children to identify signs of abuse and learn how to keep safe both on their mobile devices and when out in the community.

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

Leaders and managers have played a significant role in the design of the building. Their expert input has resulted in a spacious, thoughtfully planned living environment. Staff have supported children to add their own personal touches to the living spaces. Children and staff experience a strong sense of belonging. This is evident in the family atmosphere that prevails throughout the school and the residence.

The school's headteacher and deputy headteacher are well supported by the head of care and a strong senior leadership team. Together, they ensure that the residential provision operates to a high standard and consistently strives to enhance children's experiences. Their research-informed approach is fully embedded in practice and clearly reflected in the progress children make.

Leaders and managers are extremely dedicated about their roles. They hold high aspirations for each child's success and model a positive ethos that staff wholeheartedly share. The highly nurturing and caring environment helps children feel both loved and valued. This provides children with the confidence and security to form positive relationships with staff and with one another.

Leaders and managers have excellent oversight of the residence and a strong understanding of the wider school sector. The head ensures that children's well-being remains central to all planning and decision-making. This includes children and their families being able to access facilities in the school at weekends.

The board of governors' personal experiences help to strengthen their role. This has been a significant benefit to the school, given their knowledge and commitment to the role. It is evident that the safeguarding governor is fully aware of the head teacher's relentless drive for development. Furthermore, additional governors who share the school's vision have been recruited, with the aim of making further progress.

Training and development of staff are of a consistently high standard. This includes supporting staff during their probation, which extends to a diploma pathway. When children's specific needs are identified, face-to-face training is provided by specialists. Staff said that this training gives them the confidence to work effectively with the children.

No shortfalls or points for improvement were identified following this inspection.

## **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:** 2780471

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Julian Cochrane

**Type of school:** Residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01376 503505

**Email address:** julianc@southview.essex.sch.uk

## **Inspectors**

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector (lead)  
Steve Guirey, Social Care Inspector

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