

Clive House
70 Petty France
London
SW1H 9EX

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted

Direct T 0300 013 0150
yvette.stanley@ofsted.gov.uk



5 September 2022

Ms Annie Hudson
Chair, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

Yvette Stanley
National Director, Regulation and
Social Care

Sent by email to: Mailbox.NationalReviewPanel@education.gov.uk

Our ref: 474716

Dear Annie

Ofsted analysis of our evidence around workforce sufficiency in residential special schools (RSS) also registered as children's homes – focusing on its suitability, training, and support.

On 23 August 2022, you wrote to directors of children's services about your national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings, setting out your expectations of local authority children's services. You said that:

'Ofsted are being asked to conduct an immediate analysis of their evidence around workforce sufficiency focusing on its suitability, training, and support.'

We have reviewed our children's homes pre-inspection data request (data from the 1 April 2021 to, or as at, 31 March 2022) and data held about registrations. Some of this is self-reported and at different points in time so there are limitations.

Qualifications:

- In RSS registered as children's homes, 63% of registered managers have the level 5 qualification. This is in line with the picture for all children's homes (62%)
- 52% of registered managers have a level 4 qualification – this is above the picture for all children's homes (45%)

- In RSS registered as children's homes, 55% of permanent care staff have the level 3 qualification. This is in line with the picture for all children's homes (57%)
- Registered managers with a level 5 qualification has improved from 51% to 62%. Permanent staff with a level 3 has stayed fairly stable over the years.

Sector profile for the leadership and management judgement:

- For RSS registered as children's homes, 71% were judged good or outstanding for leadership and management. This was slightly above all children's homes (66%)
- The percentages of homes judged inadequate were very similar (7% and 6% respectively).

Registered managers:

- RSS registered as children's home had 13% vacant registered manager positions, compared to all children's homes at 14%
- For RSS registered as children's homes, 60% of registered managers have been in the post for more than 2 years, compared to 76% for all children's homes
- For RSS registered as children's homes, 8% of registered managers have been in the post for more than 10 years, compared to 2% for all children's homes
- Pre-pandemic (March 2019) the vacancy for registered managers was 9%, but as of March 2022 this has risen to 14% (unpublished data).

Staffing:

- RSS registered as children's home had a lower percentage of agency staff, compared to children's homes; 14% compared to 24%
- The percentage of staff leaving the home was the same for both RSS registered as a children's home and other children's homes. This includes staff who moved to another children's home, including in a different type of role, and staff who left the sector
- A greater percentage of staff were new in role in children's homes (45%) than RSS registered as children's homes (36%). This will include staff new to the sector, staff moving from other children's homes, including from a different type of role, and potentially staff joining a newly opening home.

We also reviewed 16 evidence bases from recent full inspections of RSS registered as children's homes that covered the four judgement areas - four each of those were judged outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good, and inadequate. This

represents 27% of all RSS also registered as children's homes. Evidence bases were reviewed from inspections carried out across all eight Ofsted regions.

All settings, irrespective of inspection judgements faced staffing shortages and used agency staff. Stronger settings with highly effective senior leaders both train and induct agency staff well and create a culture where staff, despite shortages, all pull together to ensure the needs of children are their paramount consideration. In weaker settings staff feel demoralised and operate in an 'all hands-on deck' manner which is much less child-focused. In weaker settings examples of staff 'going the extra mile' for children is associated with the endeavours of individual staff members, whereas in good or outstanding homes, this reflects the overall culture of the establishment.

The size of the setting means that the relationship between the school and home is an important factor with the best settings operating as a 'whole' where the registered manager benefits from the support of the wider senior leadership team; care staff are equally valued; and children benefit from the skills of multi-disciplinary staff such as speech and language and behavioural therapists working across both the school and care settings. When done well, children receive a consistent approach to care around-the-clock. This requires effective communication between multi-disciplinary teams, and on occasion, the high number of staff involved can lead to a disjointed approach. In outstanding settings, they call on the expertise of well-resourced health care teams to provide a holistic approach which linked the school day and care day.

In weaker homes we see the children's home 'part' of the school failing to receive focus and attention from senior leaders who do not always recognise its status as a children's home. In improving homes, senior managers ensured that registered managers were not isolated and that they were being supported to bring about improvements, including increasing the number of permanent staff.


Many RSS registered as children's homes provide care in a number of buildings. Where this is not managed well, these 'units' can be perceived by staff as 'boarding houses', rather than a single children's home.

In stronger settings, inspectors are much more likely to see a positive culture where relationships between staff and children are valued and can flourish. This is not to say children living in less well performing settings do not benefit from staff who have good relationships with them, but this is more to do with individual staff, rather than the prevailing culture of the home or school.

In summary, leadership is key: levels of staff qualification, the induction programmes for new staff and the quality of on-going training, support and supervision are important, but staff skills and children's experiences are only fully realised in a culture which embraces the value of education and care together in a holistic child-centred environment. The increasing lack of registered managers is one of my primary concerns.

I hope Ofsted's insights are helpful to your continued review. My staff and I are happy to assist in any way possible as you move towards making your conclusions and recommendations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Yvette Stanley".

Yvette Stanley

National Director, Regulation and Social Care