

Sunnydown School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Address	Sunnydown School Whyteleafe Road CATERHAM Surrey CR3 5ED
Telephone number	01883 342281
Email	
Registered person	Surrey Childrens Service
Head of care	
Head / Principal	Andrew Webster
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Sunnydown School is a residential and day school for boys aged 11 to 16 years, who have an emotional and/or learning difficulty. The school is fully maintained by Surrey Local Education Authority and currently accommodates 42 day pupils and 27 weekly boarders. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and a number have social communication disorders, such as Asperger's Syndrome. The boarding accommodation is separated into two areas; the juniors reside in the main school building and seniors occupy the first floor of a teaching block. All of the boarding accommodation is warm, well equipped and furnished to a very good standard. The school is situated in a pleasant residential area, with shops, community facilities and public transport services close by. The grounds are secure, spacious and well maintained and include a basket ball court, astro-turf sports pitch and play area.

Summary

This announced key inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector. All of the key standards were inspected, along with a number of others. The one recommendation made from the previous inspection visit was also followed up. A full tour of the premises was conducted, key personnel were interviewed and relevant documentation was scrutinised. Groups of residential pupils were interviewed and a number of parents came in to offer their views and opinions. The findings from every outcome group are outstanding. The school places the wellbeing of its pupils as its absolute priority. They are treated with respect as valued individuals and they thrive in such surroundings.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The one previous recommendation to review specific risk assessments has been fully implemented. Beyond this, the school has endeavoured to implement its own improvements, including ongoing redecoration, carpet replacement and a number of new beds. Pupils continue to influence positive changes; new activities have been introduced and reward systems have changed. Staffing levels have increased in response to pupil needs and additional specific training has been provided, for example, working with Asperger's Syndrome. Parents enjoy improved communication through the introduction of a 'home/school' book. A new traversing wall has been installed in the school gymnasium and the 'Fit 4 Life' independence programme has further developed. The school now has a greater involvement with the pre-admission process for pupils preparing to join the school.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Residential pupils positively benefit by having their primary and tertiary health needs met. Sound policy and procedural guidance pertaining to health and medical needs is implemented in practice. All of the residential team have received medication administration training, as well as first aid. The Head of Care's office holds medication cupboards and first aid equipment. This area is secure. Parents are required to provide written consent for medication administration and first aid treatment. They complete documentation detailing their own child's particular health needs, medical conditions and allergies. This is updated annually, and in between if

necessary. The amount of homely remedies held is not exhaustive and parents are asked for their written consent in order for any of these to be used. Written administration records show that such medication is only being administered in response to clear symptoms being displayed. A number of residential pupils are in receipt of regular, prescribed medication, some of which is 'controlled'. Storage for this is appropriate and safe and written records of administration show no errors. Auditing systems for medication entering and leaving the school are robust and medicines are only given if they are provided in the original packaging, complete with the directions of the prescribing practitioner. A number of residential pupils are in receipt of additional health care services, such as counselling and other therapies. The school maintains positive links with these departments and has also sought specific training when this has become necessary to meet the needs of an individual pupil, for example, epilepsy training. At present, no boarding pupil has a special dietary requirement, however, systems are in place, should this occur, to readily pass such information to the catering department. This team has very recently been joined by a new catering manager and he is already receiving very positive feedback from the boys. Whilst they say the food has always been good, they are overwhelmingly happy with the current provision. Statements include, "It's great and there is lots to choose from" and "It's like my mum's". Menus include good variety and more and more ingredients, particularly vegetables, are being introduced. Parents say, "I can't believe the things he eats now. He was much more picky before he came here". There is a strong emphasis on providing an after school cookery club and three boys are consistently saying they want to become chefs. The dining area is beautifully decorated and mealtimes are separated into two sittings, to effectively overcome the lack of space. The boys are expected to assist with serving and tidying away at the end of each sitting. This reinforces collaborative working and taking responsibility. Mealtimes are sociable and relaxed occasions, whereby staff members join the boys and engage in positive and appropriate conversations with them. A whole school food policy is currently being written and the boys confirm they are routinely asked for their views about meals by the catering team. There are no outstanding recommendations from the most recent Environmental Health Office visit and the main kitchen is being upgraded and improved. The immediate plans are to replace the existing two ovens and there are longer term plans for additional storage space. The school was awarded the 'Healthy Schools Status' and 'Sportsmark Award' last year.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Residential pupils are protected from potential harm and abuse due to the strict application of robust policies and procedures. Confidential information is sensitively managed and appropriately shared. The boys are confident that their issues and concerns are effectively listened and responded to. They know how to complain, as do parents, both within and outside of the school. This said, neither group reports the need to currently use external means because they say informal resolution works. The boys state, "You can tell any of the staff if you've got the hump and they sort it out for you" and "They're just like your mum and dad, they listen and take notice of you". Parents say, "I was always on the phone in the early days, checking things out because I was encouraged to" and "No matter how small my concern, it's never made to feel like that. My needs are treated as if they are as important as my son's". Whilst senior managers are confident with internal processes, they are conscious of the risk of complacency. Hence, external complaint and support agencies are regularly advertised and talked about. The boys know and understand the role of the Standard 33 Visitor and Independent Listener and these individuals conduct regular visits. External agencies, including Ofsted and Childline are widely advertised and contact information for these organisations is delivered in child friendly formats.

Routinely, competitions are held to check that the boys remain fully aware of these processes. Payphones are situated in private places and policy dictates that boys are always provided with change to make such calls. Given that many pupils' previous experiences include being bullied, the school adopts a clear educative approach to this issue. Records show low level and occasional instances, however, the boys are explicitly clear of the school's zero tolerance approach to incidents if they do occur. Overwhelmingly, the boys say they feel safe at school and they demonstrate a real concern for the well being of each other. Examples of observation include individuals asking if the other is okay and offering support and friendship. There is a genuine desire among the boys to ensure they look after one another. The child protection policy is clear and subject to ongoing review to ensure it remains up to date. Every member of staff, across all disciplines understands the prescribed process. Internal training is revisited annually and external training is provided for a range of staff, not just the designated child protection officer. Staff members are also fully aware of the whistle blowing procedure, should they feel it necessary to contact external agencies. Whilst clear processes are in place to report serious incidents to Ofsted, none concerning residential pupils have occurred since the last inspection. Similarly, processes exist to effectively manage unauthorised absences and the statistics for the last year are 0.6%. A proactive premises committee conducts thorough health and safety checks of the entire premises each term. Presenting risks are identified and appropriate remedial action is taken to ensure the safety of those accommodated throughout the entire provision. Residential areas are secure from potential intrusion, first floor windows are suitably restricted and water temperatures are sufficiently monitored and controlled. Electrical equipment is routinely tested and the boys know they must present their own electrical equipment, brought in from home, before it can be used. Cleaning equipment is safely stored and staff receive training in this area. Issues of maintenance and repair are swiftly reported and the health and safety policy is currently being reviewed. Systems to further enhance the auditing and monitoring of repairs and maintenance are being added to the updated version. Written recruitment processes are being implemented in practice. This serves to further protect residential pupils. Prospective employees and volunteers undergo rigorous checks, including Criminal Record Bureau checks and the verification of written references, before they can commence with their posts. Written records are maintained of the interview process and any gaps within employment histories are required to be explained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The residential team is fully aware of the educational targets set for every residential pupil and the level and detail of liaison between the teaching and residential teams is commended. There is much cross over between these two departments and respect is evident for each other's roles. Many of the teachers and teaching assistants undertake additional residential duties, providing after school clubs, extra tuition and helping with activities. There is a clear understanding however, that residential time is intended to replicate life at home, hence, attention to homework and extra tuition remains balanced and appropriate. The boys say, "We're not less intelligent than others, but sometimes we need a bit more help or time to understand things". The written records of another boy described him in Year 7 as 'suffering with very low self esteem'. Now in Year 9, written records describe his current desire to go to University. The provision of activities, both within the school and off site, is commended. During the evening of this inspection, choices included off site rock climbing and swimming and on site cookery club, roller skating in the sports hall, football and use of the school's computer facilities. Within junior dormitories, the boys have open access to board games, Lego and Mechano equipment.

Photographs of activities, past and present adorn the walls of the residential area showing their participation in playing in the snow and engaging in the annual 'Mission Impossible' event, whereby staff parade as spy characters and the boys have to act as FBI Agents and solve mysteries. The senior house provides leisure activity provision appropriate to the age of the pupils. The common room is comfortable and pupils can request to have televisions in their rooms. 'The cave' has been designed by the pupils themselves and those earning the right to use it, enjoy the privacy of this area, which houses a television, DVD, music centre, fridge and snacks. The boys describe it as "a great place to chill out and relax". Care records clearly describe the presenting individual needs of every residential pupil. Beyond this, they prescribe how such needs will be supported. Parents are particularly positive about this aspect of care provision and say they are routinely asked for their views as to the most appropriate types of intervention. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) liaises effectively with teaching and residential departments. She endeavours to visit every prospective pupil, whilst they are in their final year of primary school and ensures relevant information is disseminated to the staff team. Where appropriate, she delivers individual teaching sessions and is accessible to the boarding team for ongoing advice. External agencies provide support where necessary, including speech and language therapy, educational psychology and the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are numerous forums in place in order for pupils to share their views and contribute to the residential provision. The student council is effective and valued. Pupils say they have a real influence over the decision making process and give examples of developing 'the cave' in the senior block and changing the rewards rules to make them more age appropriate. Their comments about school meals directly impact upon menu planning and sensible suggestions about activities are implemented. This level of dialogue and autonomy reflects sound and positive relationships between staff and pupils. Senior boys say, "You are treated like an adult, so you act like one". Junior boys say, "The staff don't boss you around. They let you have fun, but you do get told off if you're naughty". When asked about rules and sanctions, the boys are clearly able to give examples and can also describe why such rules are in place. Given the school's approach and ethos, the prescribed sanctions in place are used appropriately, albeit minimally. The school's admissions criteria are clear and explicit. To this end, pupils who do arrive can expect to find staff in place who are able to effectively meet their presenting needs. The assessment process involves all interested parties, including parents and the pupil. The introductory afternoon is particularly valued by parents and their sons. Assessment information is effectively used to reliably inform initial care plans, which continue to be subject to ongoing review and update. The boys understand their care plans. They are actively involved in target setting and meet with their key workers on a weekly basis to review their own progress. Payphones are situated in quiet, private areas and the boys confirm they can contact their parents easily and in private. Parents say their sons often don't call home because they say they are too busy with activities. Written records show regular telephone calls are made to parents by the staff and those spoken with confirm excellent levels of communication, which include the home/school book. Policy dictates that money is always to be made available to the boys for telephone contact with home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Residential accommodation is separated into two areas, appropriately separating juniors and seniors. The junior provision is on the first floor of the Victorian main school building and houses five shared bedrooms, accommodating groups of two and four boys. The entire area, including its main stairway, is wooden panelled and this gives it an immediate warmth. Photographs of previous and current pupils and staff adorn the walls and notice boards display relevant information. Staff have made huge efforts to decorate and personalise bedrooms. They are brightly painted and furnishings are of good quality. The boys say their beds are very comfortable and they have enough space to hang and store their clothes. They all have lockers for the storage of treasured and valuable items. Every individual area has posters, photographs and own bedding, much of which demonstrates favoured football clubs and because most of the rooms are spacious, easy chairs and bean bags provide additional comfort. These rooms are warm, well ventilated and equipped with numerous games and play equipment. The Head of Care's office is central to this provision and bathrooms and toilets are close to all bedrooms. The boys say they enjoy good privacy. The current rolling refurbishment plan identifies bathrooms in this area for upgrading. The senior provision is situated on the first floor of a newer teaching block. The main corridor and lounge boasts many excellent pieces of pupils' own art work and communal areas are furnished with very modern equipment to reflect the personal tastes of those living here. Bedrooms generally accommodate two boys and these have additional desks to accommodate those wishing to complete extra study. An additional room to the rear of the building has been refurbished and named as 'the cave' by the boys. This is equipped with a television, DVD, music system, fridge and comfortable seating. Seniors earn the privilege to gain unsupervised access to this room through the revised reward system and this is proving to be extremely popular. Junior and senior pupils confirm they are able to obtain any personal requisites they may need whilst staying at school. Once the school day is over, they return to their living areas and change out of school uniform. An effective laundry system is in place and the boys are encouraged to bring down their own items for washing. The school has developed an excellent programme that focuses upon the acquisition of independence skills. The 'Fit 4 Life' programme was initially developed by a staff member as part of his NVQ award and has been evolving and developing ever since. Commencing at Year 9, residential pupils seek to achieve the bronze award, which involves learning to tell the time, make a bed and budgeting to then cook supper. As the awards progress through silver and on to gold, tasks become more complex and the 'final challenge' sees a small group of pupils living independently in the senior block for a week with minimal, arms length support. This aspect of provision is commended.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school provides informative written literature for all of its stakeholders. The Statement of Purpose has been updated this year and written information for pupils is delivered in child friendly formats. The school is approved by the Council for the Registration of Schools for the Teaching of Dyslexic pupils (CReSTeD) and has attained the Investors in People Award. The residential team is stable and motivated. All mandatory training is up to date and the newest recruit has already commenced with NVQ training; the rest of the team have all achieved this. The Head of Care possesses the NVQ level 4 and the Registered Manager's Award and is also an NVQ 4 Assessor. Her Deputy possesses the NVQ level 4 and is an NVQ level 3 Assessor. The Head of Care adopts an open and inclusive style of leadership and all staff benefit from good quality line management and supervision. The Deputy Head Teacher is the training and development coordinator for the school. He liaises closely with the Head of Care in developing

the annual training timetable, in order that the ongoing training needs of all departments are effectively provided for. Professional development is actively promoted and encouraged. Personal development plans are in place. Examples demonstrate excellent achievement, for example, one member of the residential team has obtained an NVQ qualification, moved across as a teaching assistant and has now undertaken teacher training. Clear and effective monitoring systems are being implemented. Policies and procedures continue to be reviewed and ratified by the Board of Governors. The Chairperson is extremely active and passionately interested in the welfare of the pupils. The Head Teacher encourages heads of services to have ownership of their particular departments and the pursuit of continued improvement is embedded within the culture of the school. The Standard 33 Visitor conducts regular and thorough audits of the residential provision and this provides an additional external monitoring safeguard.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for residential special school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children live in a healthy environment and the health and intimate care needs of each child are identified and promoted (NMS 14)
- children are provided with healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs (NMS 15)

Ofsted considers 14 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled (NMS 3)
- children's complaints are addressed without delay and children are kept informed of progress in their consideration (NMS 4)
- the welfare of children is promoted, children are protected from abuse, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse (NMS 5)
- children are protected from bullying (NMS 6)
- all significant events relating to the protection of children in the school are notified to the appropriate authorities by the head of the school or designated person (NMS 7)
- children who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return (NMS 8)
- children are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour (NMS 10)
- children live in schools that provide physical safety and security (NMS 26)
- there is careful selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the school to prevent children being exposed to potential abusers (NMS 27)

Ofsted considers 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 26 and 27 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the school's residential provision actively supports children's educational progress at the school (NMS 12)
- children have ample opportunity to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activities within the school and in the local community (NMS 13)
- children receive individual support when they need it (NMS 22)

Ofsted considers 12 and 22 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the school is run; no child should be assumed to be unable to communicate their views (NMS 2)
- children have sound relationships with staff based on honesty and mutual respect (NMS 9)
- children experience planned and sensitively handled admission and leaving processes (NMS 11)

- children have their needs assessed and written plans outline how these needs will be met while at school (NMS 17)
- in accordance with their wishes children are able and encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and families while at school (NMS 20)

Ofsted considers 2, 17 and 20 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children can wear their own clothing outside school time, can secure personal requisites and stationery while at school, and are helped to look after their own money (NMS 16)
- children about to leave care are prepared for the transition into independent living (NMS 21)
- children live in well designed and pleasant premises, which provide sufficient space and facilities to meet their needs
- children live in accommodation which is appropriately decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use (NMS 24)
- children are able to carry out their personal care in privacy and with dignity (NMS 25)

Ofsted considers the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- children, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a clear statement of the school's care principles and practice for boarding pupils (NMS 1)
- children's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality and their group interactions (NMS 18)
- there are adequate records of the staff and child groups of the school (NMS 19)
- children are looked after by staff who understand their needs and are able to meet them consistently (NMS 28)
- children are looked after by staff who are trained to meet their needs (NMS 29)
- children are looked after by staff who are themselves supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting the children's welfare (NMS 30)
- children receive the care and services they need from competent staff (NMS 31)
- children and staff enjoy the stability of efficiently run schools (NMS 32)
- the governing body, trustees, local authority, proprietor or other responsible body monitors the welfare of the children in the school (NMS 33)

Ofsted considers 1, 28, 31 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.