

# Pencalenick Residential Special School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	25 November 2008

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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

Since September 2009 Pencalenick School has been a member school of the 'Roseland and Truro Education Trust' but retains maintained status. It is a maintained trust special school providing education for 110 children with complex communication and learning difficulties, including autism. Pupils come from across Cornwall and are age 11 to 16 years. The school has been successful in achieving Communication Interaction Specialist Status and the Healthy Schools Award.

The school campus is founded on a large country house with extensive grounds, in close proximity to Truro. The school runs a weekly boarding unit in the main school building and currently there are 32 pupils using the boarding facilities. Boarding at the school is either weekly, Monday to Thursday nights but increasingly, there is a trend towards respite and flexi boarding stays. The latter may be as little as one night per week. Children board for geographical or social reasons and are accommodated on two floors in part of the main school building.

### Summary

This was an announced key inspection of the school's boarding welfare arrangements as set out in the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools. The school has a good record of providing special education to children with complex individual needs and equally to promote and safeguard the welfare of boarders. The school population is a changing one in terms of the needs of children, moving away from previous emotional and behaviour disorders and boarding reflects these changes. The school is responding well to these changes and staff are enthusiastic to meet the new challenges. Care staff particularly have developed new skills in communication and understanding the complex needs of children they care for. Parents report their respect for the staff teams and appreciate the quality of care and education their children receive at Pencalenick. The leadership team closely monitors standards operating within the school and boarding and is reflective in its approach to continued care practice. Observations regarding procedural matters were made during the course of the inspection and are reflected as recommendations in this report. However, they have little or no direct impact on the outcomes experienced by young people. Boarders were happy in the environment of the school's boarding provision and achieve positive outcomes from their time there. Their responses to questionnaires showed they felt safe, had adults they trusted and would confide in, knew what was expected of them and liked the time they spent in boarding. Several who were flexi boarders said they wished they could stay more often. One young person's response to the question 'What is Pencalenick School good at doing?' simply stated 'They look after us.' This sentiment is repeated throughout the boarders' questionnaires and is an apt summary of the holistic approach of the school to every pupil.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

There were eight recommendations made at the last inspection. These were mainly to do with process rather than care practice. The service has responded to these recommendations in a positive way and processes have been improved. There are standardised recruitment systems in place, children's records are more consistent and staff have clear training opportunities. Staff

have received formal supervision and have annual appraisals. There are, however, still no formal arrangements for monitoring visits by the local authority and the site Health and Safety assessment has yet to be done.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

The school has achieved a 'Healthy Schools Award'. The boarders have lots of opportunities for exercise and eat healthily. Mealtimes are pleasant, social occasions, the boarders have plenty to eat and enjoy the food. The children's education curriculum covers a range of health promotion topics and the boarding arrangements support these.

The health needs of individual children are known and documented. Issues of intimate personal care and personal hygiene are planned for on an individual basis and carried out sensitively. The general health care of children and young people using this service remains the responsibility of parents and the school follows established health care regimes. Exceptionally staff from the service have assisted children's health appointments where parents had particular difficulties in supporting their child.

All medication is brought in at the start of each respite stay and is administered by staff. Storage of medication is secure and is signed for and witnessed. It is recognised the school is dependent on parents sending medication in with their children and that this is not always done in the most appropriate manner in terms of packaging. The storage and administration records are accurate when sampled but from the way the register is completed it is not always clear which page is current.

Staff are trained in first aid and have specific training in identified procedures, such as management of epilepsy. Support from allied professionals is in place where appropriate and forms part of the child's individual record.

Healthy lifestyles and healthy eating are promoted throughout the scope of the school's operations. During respite stays children are provided with meals based on fresh produce and home cooking. Individual likes and dislikes are well known but, wherever possible, opportunities are found to introduce children to new foods and eating experiences. There are plenty of opportunities for children to enjoy exercise through organised activities or individual play using the adventure play equipment in the grounds and play grounds.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The school has effective measures in place to safeguard children and to promote their welfare.

Children's privacy and dignity is protected during their boarding stays. Bedroom space has been rationalised to provide more single or twin room occupancy and intimate care and personal hygiene plans are in place for individuals where appropriate. Improvements to bathroom facilities have further enhanced personal dignity for the children.

Staff are aware of their duty to safeguard children, have had appropriate training and have appropriate links with the Local Authority. Safeguarding in its widest form is linked through

policies that are common to both school and the boarding facility. Further specialist training is being pursued with the Local Authority.

There are appropriate policy and procedure documents in place covering complaints bullying awareness and absences without authority but staff practice is such that through close supervision, awareness and knowledge of individual children these are not major issues. Boarders mention incidents of what they perceive as bullying of others but are clear that the school is swift to act in such circumstances.

Behaviour management arrangements are sound with clear individual behaviour management plans in place for children. There are good recording systems in place to track incidents and these coordinate with separate records of physical interventions. The need for physical intervention has diminished and staff were observed using de-escalation and distraction techniques very effectively. Sanctions for inappropriate behaviour as rarely used because they are ineffective for children using this service.

Pencalenick has a good record of health and safety awareness with all appliances and mains services being checked regularly with specialist contractors. Risk assessments are generally robust and comprehensive in their coverage of activities and events. The record of fire drills and emergency evacuations does not make clear which events are planned drills and which are false alarms. However, boarders made it clear in discussions that they know what to do and where to go if they hear the fire alarms. The site safety assessment has not been updated due to the absence of key personnel.

The school has sound recruitment procedures in place and works with the Local Authority vetting and checking team. Responses to questionnaires issued before the inspection stated positively that parents, staff and allied professionals felt that children's safety was paramount whilst staying at the school.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff work hard to ensure children enjoy their stays in boarding and support children's education in a practical skills based way. Care staff interact regularly with education and pastoral staff teams to ensure a free flow of significant information across the school.

There is a wide range of activities that children enjoy each night either individually or as part of a group. There is a boarder's team which is part of a local skittles league that plays regularly. Activities are well researched and many are known to be favourites of individual children. Care staff communicate with children in a variety of ways to establish what they want to do in their free time. Staff use these opportunities to further enhance children's experiences and develop their abilities. Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of each child and their individual needs.

Staff are skilled at treating each child as the individual they are, using appropriate communication and realistic expectation levels. Observations at meal times and in the boarding areas evidenced staff giving appropriate, individual attention in a sympathetic, unobtrusive manner as required. Because of the nature of the children's stays there are changes in the mix of children being cared for from one evening to the next. Staff encourage children through opportunity and praise to achieve their potential and contribute to the group they are part of.

Each boarder has a skills-based achievement record which staff complete as new skills are evidenced. This document currently forms the main recording tool to monitor each boarder's progress and development throughout their boarding experience.

Staff clearly stated that the challenges of the current pupil population are very different from previously but they enjoy exercising their new skills through their interactions with children. Children are clear in their responses to questionnaires that they enjoy their time in boarding.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Given the range of needs and diversity of abilities displayed by children attending the school and reflected in boarding, staff provide children with numerous opportunities to determine how they spend their time in boarding and to contribute their views. These occur at the end of meals, during the course of activities and in the many one to one contacts between staff and boarders throughout the evenings.

There are good links between the care team and school staff. The school council had representatives from boarding and children know how to place issues on the council agenda for discussion and boarders have benefited from decisions made through improvements to the overall school environment and facilities. The school provides specialist help for pupils who have particular auditory or speech difficulties and care practices reflect these significant factors in boarding. Boarders know how they can raise concerns, make complaints or otherwise express their views whilst in boarding. They place great trust in the care team and their interactions are free-flowing and natural.

There are good plans and recording systems in place to cover individual stays. Staff contribute to school reviews and statutory child in need reviews through written reports and attendance. Children have very close supervision throughout their stays and staff take every opportunity to widen children's life experiences through play, outings, games, food or activity.

Maintaining contact with parents, friends and family is not an issue as such given the duration of children's stays. However, it is clear that parents feel able to contact staff at any time if they have concerns or need to discuss particular issues. Children were observed using the pay phone with reasonable degrees of privacy during the course of their stays.

The school has responded to the challenges of the changing needs of the children being referred for residential placements by adapting its approaches and practices to meet those needs. It has done so with enthusiasm and commitment. There is constant reflection and evaluation of the effectiveness of individual strategies geared towards maximising the potential of individual children.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarders have a homely environment in which to enjoy their nights at school. Recent improvements to showers, furnishings and equipment have enhanced the quality of accommodation, enabled better facilities and provide a safe environment for children boarding at the school. Improvements to the boarding environment are ongoing and boarders benefit from use of the wider facilities of the school in the evenings. Boarders clearly enjoy their stays

at the school; many stated they wished they could stay more frequently and there are good links with organisations in the local community.

### Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the service is good. There is clear, strong leadership and management of the school and boarding through the Head and Head of Care. Staff have positive structures for supervision, appraisal and training. Care staff are included in these structures and regularly meet as a care team to discuss the individual boarding pupils. There are records of internal monitoring carried out by the head teacher, head of care and visiting governor. Hard copy, original, records are not always signed-off to show when they were last monitored. The local authority has not appointed a representative to formally monitor standards of service delivery on behalf of the service provider.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each child is very much an individual and every effort is made to get to know what likes and dislikes each has. Staff quickly get to know individual behaviour traits and personal clues to mood and needs. Given the complexity of needs displayed by children the school has a strong inclusive attitude that encourages children and promotes actions to prove disability is not a barrier to opportunity or achievement.

### 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):

- ensure the storage and administration of medication is as safe and clear as is practicable (NMS14.17 & 14.18)
- clarify entries in the fire log to distinguish between planned fire drills and false alarms (NMS 26.6)
- ensure a Health and Safety risk assessment of the site is carried out and recorded (NMS 26.3)
- continue to monitor the current care planning document against the recommended content of NMS 17 and NMS18