

Capenhurst Grange Special School

Inspection report for Residential Special School

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

This residential special school is maintained by the local authority and provides special education for up to 63 children between the ages of 11 and 16 who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of children are day pupils.

Boarding provision is available four nights a week from Monday to Thursday. Some boarders stay more nights than others. At the time of the inspection 15 children were receiving flexible programmes of residential care in the boarding provision. There is also a range of after-school clubs available to both day pupils and boarders.

The school premises include; residential, administrative and recreational buildings. The residential accommodation consists of domestic style lounges, bathrooms and shower rooms and single bedrooms, some of which are en-suite. There is parking available for visitors.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection, covering all the outcome areas and key national minimum standards, carried out with five working days notice.

Outcomes for boarders are good with some outstanding elements. The health of boarders is promoted well, notably with regards to supporting pupils with their emotional health. There are safe procedures for ensuring boarders receive the medication they need though minor aspects of how this is achieved fall short of best practice. Boarders safety is well protected and there is effective approach to enable pupils to develop, mature and take responsibility for their behaviour. The approach to safeguarding is another notable feature of the school.

Support for boarders to enjoy their time at the school and make realistic achievements is outstanding. There are good opportunities to learn life skills and develop independence, preparing pupils for life when they leave the school. The quality of boarding accommodation is good and there are plans for further improvements. The use of and reason for the school's auditory monitoring alarms used during the night to promote safety and welfare are not clearly documented.

Overall management of the school is good and has improved since the last inspection helping to drive a culture of continuous improvement and bring best practice into the school. This is reflected in the good and outstanding outcomes pupils experience at the school. There was an identified shortfall in internal monitoring and in the range of information about the school available to boarders and their parents.

The good practice recommendations made in relation to the improvements identified are judged not to have had any impact on the outcomes experienced by boarders.

Improvements since the last inspection

All the recommendations from the last inspection have been met.

There is an available up-to-date fire risk assessment for the school and required recruitment checks are in place both of which help to safeguard boarders welfare.

Not only do staff obtain copies of relevant information about looked after children there is good attendance at meetings about the needs of these children helping ensure good communication and promoting their welfare.

There are better arrangements for the supervision of staff helping ensure boarders are cared for by competent staff. Staffing levels have improved so that there are suitable staffing levels throughout the day and night to meet boarders' needs.

The head of care has achieved the recommended qualification and internal quality assurance processes, including the visits of governors have improved. As a result boarders benefit from more effective senior management. The person responsible for child protection is clearly named in relevant information about the school making it clear who to report concerns to.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The arrangements for health promotion and protection contribute towards good healthy outcomes for pupils at the school. This is reflected in the school achieving an award for its approach to health promotion. Though a recommendation is made regarding best practice in the management of medication this has not impacted on the judgement for this outcome area.

There is continuous assessment and review of pupil's health needs, which starts with the admission process. Before admission to the school a pupil's individual health needs, including psychological and emotional needs, are identified and assessed. Each pupil has an individual written health plan to help ensure their needs are met. Ongoing review of health needs is enhanced by the dedicated and committed work of staff and well developed links with other health professionals. This includes home visits, partnership working with parents to gather as much information about individual health issues and the use of specialist health professionals such as speech and language therapists. In addition the school also provides opportunities for pupils to undertake counselling, peer mentoring and art therapy. There is a strong commitment from the school leadership down to the hands on care and support of pupils, to ensure a nurturing environment to promote and safeguard the emotional health and stability of pupils. This is a notable strength of the school.

Pupils learn about health care issues at school and know how to lead healthy lifestyles. Physical health is promoted well through a range of activities. Pupils also receive good support to access a range of health services for treatment or guidance depending on their individual needs. Smoking is not allowed in any part of the school or grounds. Staff are trained in first aid in the event of any accidents and there are thorough procedures for ensuring pupils get any necessary medication. Minor aspects of the administration of medication and associated record keeping are not all in line with best practice. This was not judged to impact on outcomes for pupils particularly as there is an emphasis on administering medication in a sensitive and dignified manner.

Pupils are able to contribute to the school menus and have opportunities to learn independence skills, prepare and cook their own meals. Meals provided by the school are healthy, of good quality with plenty of choice. There is fresh fruit in the boarding accommodation and boarders benefit from healthy breakfasts. The range of food caters to pupils individual needs and preferences.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is very good practice to ensure pupils are kept free from harm so that they feel safe at school. Safeguarding responsibilities are taken very seriously from care staff to the governing body.

Pupils benefit from an effective, professional and caring approach to safeguarding that ensures pupils are protected from abuse. Any allegations or concerns both about abuse or the general welfare of pupils are managed very well and communicated to the right authorities and other relevant health and social care professionals. This helps ensure there is an open and integrated approach to promoting pupils' welfare. All staff are trained in ensuring effective safeguarding practice takes place. Key staff with additional responsibilities for safeguarding pupils are knowledgeable, committed and demonstrate a high level of professionalism to ensure pupils are safe and their welfare is promoted. This is another notable strength of the school.

There is a sensitive and person-centred approach to care and support of pupils to help them develop and flourish. Care practice helps keep pupils free from bullying and promotes a calm, relaxed and settled atmosphere in the boarding houses. Staff explore and develop positive individual strategies for supporting pupils with any challenging behaviour which reflects pupils' individual needs and backgrounds. There are firm but fair boundaries, expectations of acceptable behaviour are clear and institutional interventions are avoided. As a result, there are very few sanctions or consequences used as a measure of discipline and staff rarely have to physically intervene to keep pupils safe in the boarding houses. This area of practice is another notable strength of the school. Any incidents are well recorded and monitored by senior managers to ensure pupils are getting the right levels of support.

Pupils say they feel safe, know how to complain should they want to and have plenty of staff to talk to about any concerns. Parents also know how to complain to the school. There has been one complaint since the last inspection which has been thoroughly addressed to ensure the complainant is happy with the outcome. Pupils benefit from having their privacy respected and personal information about them is kept safe and secure.

There is good management of health and safety and the school provides a safe and secure physical environment. The fire risk assessment that had been locked away at the last inspection was readily available and there are regular fire drills and tests of the fire alarm system and associated fire safety equipment. There are strict procedures for the recruitment of new staff including necessary background checks to make sure only suitable staff are employed at the school. These checks include up-to-date Criminal Records Bureau disclosures for those staff identified at the last inspection as not having a clearly recorded List 99 check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pupils benefit from the hard work and enthusiasm of staff that provides them with outstanding levels of support. This is founded in excellent care that promotes pupil well-being, helps pupils cope with their emotional difficulties and teaches them to manage and take control of their own behaviour. This is reflected in several ways, for example, incidents of challenging behaviour in boarding houses are rare, the frequency of pupils boarding has increased, there is higher school attendance and more pupils want to board.

Care and support of pupils is based on their individually assessed needs, circumstances and backgrounds. This helps provides pupils with excellent outcomes and opportunities to develop, become more independent and follow their hobbies and interests. As one boarder put it, 'There are so many nice staff in the school.' Also, parental feedback convincingly rates the school well, in particular, for the fact that the experience of boarding makes a positive contribution to children's personal development. This is reflected too in stakeholder comments, 'Staff have high levels of commitment and are willing to persevere with difficult behaviour' and 'Educational, social and emotional needs are well met.'

There is a very effective whole school approach to supporting pupils with their development, through the integration of boarding and teaching staff and commitment to the school ethos and values. There is a strong, inclusive ethos in school ensuring equality of opportunity and promotion of pupils diversity. Pupils also benefit from very good links with the local and wider community including colleges, cadets, sports and youth clubs. All pupils have opportunities to be involved in a range of school projects including the boarding and school committees, activities, fund raising and work experience. This all contributes towards helping pupils develop their social skills, improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are good opportunities for pupils to contribute positively to their development, decisions about their lives and the running of the school. This is founded in the quality of relationships staff build up with individual pupils. Staff are motivated and genuinely care about the welfare and achievements of pupils.

Admissions to the school are planned involving prospective pupils and their families. Pupils may visit the school, and usually attend as a day pupil before accessing the boarding provision. Use of the after-school clubs helps pupils become familiar with what boarding will be like. Pupils' needs are assessed before admission helping to ensure the school is the right place for them to come to. As such pupils are supported as far as possible to move into the school in a planned and sensitive manner. Careful consideration is also given to ensure that new pupils being admitted will not have an adverse impact on pupils already at the school. This helps ensure good outcomes for all boarders are maintained. There is flexibility in offering boarding on different nights to different pupils if this is necessary to promote their welfare and to manage everyone's needs well.

There is good communication with parents about pupils' welfare and progress. Pupils regularly visit home and keep in contact with friends and family while boarding. Families are also welcome to visit pupils at school. There is a parenting group that visits weekly, families can eat with boarders and be part of the school life. Parents receive positive support and are encouraged to contribute to the running of the school.

Pupils' needs continue to be assessed and reviewed after admission. Staff strive to obtain all relevant information about a pupil which is then used to develop a care plan of how individual pupils are supported at school. This includes information about looked after children and outcomes from meetings about their welfare. The care plans detail the support a pupil will receive based on their needs, backgrounds and potential risks to their welfare. This includes any specific needs based on culture, religion and disability. Pupils are involved in developing their care plan and there is plenty of one-to-one time with staff to talk about their achievements and any anxieties.

There is good practice with regards to the participation, consultation and inclusion of pupils in their welfare, care and management of the school. Pupils are included in assessing their own abilities and setting targets for personal and social development. On a wider scale the school and house committees meet regularly. Pupils are asked their views about a range of issues and contribute to decisions about the running of the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils benefit from the support and arrangements to help them develop some independent living skills and prepare for the transition to adulthood. The school has a range of cooking facilities and accommodation for boarders to use. Older boarders have more independent living arrangements and can make their own suppers and breakfast. Cooking skills are also developed with support from staff through an after-school club. An independent unit is being developed by senior managers to provide further facilities for boarders to develop independence skills. There are links with the local and wider community including a range of work experience opportunities and career guidance linked to pupils' individual needs. This has a positive impact for pupils with good opportunities to develop new life skills and boost their confidence and self-esteem.

There is a commitment to providing a homely atmosphere and there are good standards of furniture and décor in the boarding accommodation. All boarders have single bedrooms some with en-suite facilities. There is plenty of space and ample communal facilities with a number of bathrooms and lounges. Pupils benefit from a range of facilities including outdoor play areas, a computer room, play room with games consoles and a sports hall. The school offers a range of after-school clubs for both day and boarding pupils.

There is an auditory alarm system used in parts of the boarding accommodation to help safeguard boarders and alerts staff on a night time if boarders are wandering around. This is not clearly detailed in the school's Statement of Purpose and agreed with placing authorities as required to be considered an acceptable safeguarding measure.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is strong and effective management of the boarding provision and care of pupils. This ensures there are good and outstanding outcomes for pupils who board at the school.

The monitoring and quality assurance systems in place have been developed since the last inspection. This has been helped by the head teacher, head of care and chair of governors securing permanent roles in the leadership of the school. This improved leadership has driven up standards and ensured the recommendations from the last inspection have been implemented.

Governors play a key role in monitoring the quality of boarding provision and the welfare and safety of pupils. They visit frequently and provide written reports to the governing body about the school. The frequency and content of these visits has improved to meet national minimum standards. Key records about pupils safety and

welfare are monitored by several managers with particular responsibilities and who are held to account by the senior management team and governing body. The head teacher provides the governors with regular reports about the quality and development of the school. Though these are not thorough with regards to compliance with all the national minimum standards this was not judged to have an impact on the outcomes pupils experience.

There is a competent and experienced staff group with clear deputising arrangements when the head of care is absent. There are good staffing levels which have improved since the last inspection to support pupils with all their care needs at all times of the day and night. Staff have the recommended qualification to care for children and young people and the head of care now has a National Vocational Qualification at Level 4. Staff are suitably trained and supervised to ensure that they look after pupils well and that the school lives up to its aims and objectives.

Although aims and objectives are set out in the school prospectus, this document does not thoroughly describe what the school sets out to do for those pupils who board and the manner in which care is provided and the criteria for admission is not very well set out. This aspect of the school's published information is already under review. Further information about the school and some key policies are available on the school's website. Publicly available information does not include details for parents and pupils of how to contact Ofsted or the local authority's children's services department should they wish to raise any concerns.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Pupils receive excellent support that reflects their needs, backgrounds and individuality. Pupils learn about other cultures and issues of equality. Records are in good order and reflect the individuality of pupils and show their needs, how they are supported, their achievements and development.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure the policy and written guidance on administering and storing medication is in line with good practice, in particular the recording of stock and avoiding secondary dispensing of medication (NMS 14.17)
- ensure the use of the auditory alarms used in the boarding accommodation is detailed in individual children's care plans, is specifically approved by the placing authority or parent and is described in the school's Statement of Purpose (NMS 23.8)
- ensure the Statement of Purpose accurately describes what the school sets out to do for those children it accommodates, the manner in which care is provided

and includes information on the admission criteria and how children and parents can contact Ofsted and the local authority (NMS 1)

- ensure the headteacher carries out at least once each year and records in writing; a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, specifically in relation to the Statement of Purpose, staffing policy, placement plans for children, and an internal assessment of the compliance with national minimum standards. (NMS 32.4)