

# Pencalenick Residential Special School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Christina Maddison

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**School address** Pencalenick School, St. Clement, TRURO, Cornwall,  
TR1 1TE  
**Telephone number** 01872 520385  
**Email** head@pencalenick.cornwall.sch.uk  
**Headteacher** Mr Andy Barnett

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Information about the school

Pencalenick special school has recently achieved academy status. It provides education for 110 children of both genders who have complex communication and learning difficulties, including autism. Pupils come from across Cornwall and are aged 11 to 16 years. The school has been successful in achieving Communication Interaction Specialist Status, the Healthy Schools Award and most recently has gained National Support School status. The head teacher is a designated national leader of education.

The school campus is sited within a large country estate with extensive grounds, in close proximity to the City of Truro. The boarding accommodation comprises parts of two floors in the main school building which is in the original estate house. Boarding is either weekly Monday to Thursday nights or respite boarding of one or two nights a week. Currently there are 18 weekly boarders and the average occupancy is around 25 boarders each weekday night. Boarding at the school was last inspected in February 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>good</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	good
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of boarding at the school is good. The school provides a good quality boarding experience that increases boarders' social skills, independent living skills and emotional well being. This helps them grow into young people who are as independent as possible when leave the school. Boarders make positive friendships and learn tolerance and respect for the other boarders, many of who have diverse abilities and care needs.
- There are outstanding procedures for safeguarding boarders that are robust and effective and ensure boarders safety and well being are central to the school.
- The school cares well for boarders' health needs and provides them with a varied and nourishing diet.
- Boarders enjoy staying in comfortable and warm accommodation that they are able to personalise according to their tastes and interests.
- The boarding house runs smoothly on a daily basis and boarders receive very good care and support from staff. Staff ensure that individual care needs are met and boarders are encouraged to be as independent as possible.
- Since the last inspection the school has made good progress and addressed the 2 recommendations from the last report. Families are now able to telephone boarders at any time and the school's policies and procedures are now available and fully updated on the school website.
- The school meets almost all of the national minimum standards but needs to make sure that a visit from an independent visitor takes place each half term to monitor the quality of care and that a report is issued from the visit with actions

for the Head of Care to address to improve the quality of care. The national minimum standards are not met in this area. The record of sanctions does not evidence that boarders' are encouraged to give their views about any sanctions given for inappropriate behaviour. Care plans are not currently regularly and formally evaluated to ensure that boarder's needs are being met in the most effective way possible by staff.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Outcomes for boarders are good. Boarders' achieve well socially and emotionally from their starting points as a result of boarding at the school. Boarders' are very well settled into the routines of the school and appear relaxed and very happy. One boarder said 'It's a lovely place to come and stay' and another said 'I love coming here, the staff make me laugh'. The diverse range of care needs and behaviours are well managed by the staff and as a result, boarders are tolerant and kind to each other. Boarders behave well and accept as fair the sanctions which result from any unacceptable behaviour.

Boarder's personal development, social skills and communication skills are enhanced as a result of boarding at the school. They develop new interests, friendships and a sense of independence. Boarders said at they have a say in the day to day running of the boarding house and think that staff are sensitive to their opinions and views no matter how limited their verbal communication.

Boarders feel very safe when boarding at the school. Health care needs are met and staff are knowledgeable and skilled in dealing with emotional and mental health care needs. Healthy eating is promoted and boarders said that they thought the food was 'really nice.'

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of the boarding provision is good. Boarders benefit from clear and effective communication between education staff and boarding staff. This means that the transition from the school day to boarding runs smoothly and boarding staff are aware of any issues that have happened during the day and can deal with them.

Individualised care plans are in place for each boarder. These contain information for the boarding staff that enables them to understand the support needs of each boarder. These care plans are not formally evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that boarders' needs are being supported most effectively. However, the staff are aware of the need to offer individualised care for each boarder. They have extensive knowledge of the boarders care needs and have been planning, for example, how to enable the more able boarders to use public transport independently. Updates on boarders' needs are shared at the daily staff meetings. Therefore shortfalls in the documentation of the care plans has a minimal impact on

outcomes for boarders. Staff are aware of any cultural, religious or racial needs and these are documented. This ensures that these identified needs of the boarders' are met.

Boarders' said that they liked the activities on offer and could choose what they did. There is always a range of activities on offer at the boarding house or in the community to suit all abilities and interests. For example, they are able to go fishing, shopping in the nearby city centre, to the cinema, cook, or play on computer games. Staff are sensitive to the fact that some of the boarders need quiet time after school and help them to achieve this by ensuring that they have a single room and are not disturbed by the other boarders.

Boarder's health is promoted at the school. Staff are very knowledgeable about health care needs and this is documented to ensure that staff are clear about how to meet identified health care needs. The staff attend any reviews regarding input from outside agencies such as psychotherapists and physiotherapists. Medication is safely managed and there is close and effective communication between the boarding staff and parents, who send in the boarder's medication to the school on a weekly basis. This means that boarders' always receive their medication on time and all of their health care needs are met.

Boarders said that they liked the food on offer and thought that staff helped them to eat healthily. They are able to make snacks and drinks in the boarding house which helps them to develop their independent living skills. The school's main kitchen and dining area is currently being refurbished and the completion date is delayed, meaning that there has been a change in dining routines and location and meals are being brought in from another school in the area. Boarders have coped very well with the change in their routines which could be very disturbing for some of them. Staff have successfully managed this change so that the impact on the boarders has been minimal and one boarder said that "it is fun to eat somewhere else."

Boarders enjoy staying in good quality accommodation that is homely, well furnished and maintained. They are proud of their rooms and have personalised them to their tastes and interests. Most of the rooms are shared by two boarders. Boarders' said that they liked sharing with their friends. If a boarder requests or benefits from a single room then staff ensure that a single room is allocated. Boarders have the use and benefit of extensive and well maintained grounds, including a well equipped playground. Boarders are able to use the internet, which has appropriate control filters, and are able to telephone home in private if they wish. This means that they are able to maintain contact with family and friends. It was observed that the boarders and boarding staff have a trusting and relaxed relationship. One young boarder said that they loved staying in boarding, they were always warm enough and the staff were like their 'boarding mummies'. Survey forms from parents commented on the excellent nurturing and caring attitudes of the boarding staff at the school. Boarders' said that their possessions were always safe and that staff would look after anything if they asked them to.

There is a clear policy and procedure for introducing boarders to the school and when they are planning to leave the school. Prospective boarders' and their parents are encouraged to visit the school and decide if their child's needs are appropriate for the school and if they are able to be met there. This ensures that the school is able to meet their needs. New boarders are closely monitored and supported to contact parents if they wish at any time. The school is currently developing a DVD for prospective boarders so that they are able to view the school's facilities in a format that is appropriate to their level of understanding. The boarding staff are fully involved when a boarder is preparing to leave the school. Staff liaise with future placements and support the boarders to make successful transitions, usually to colleges of further education. The staff then contact the placements a few months after the transition so that success levels can be monitored. This ensures comprehensive evaluation to understand if the transition was successful for the young person and see if procedures are able to be further improved.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard boarders' welfare. Boarders' feel very safe and are very safe when boarding at the school. Staff are extremely vigilant and are able to observe any slight change in behaviour that may indicate that something is amiss with an individual boarder. This helps staff to take protective action to follow up any concerns about a boarder. All staff are trained in child protection. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection issues and are pro-active in working with other agencies such as social services, to ensure the safety and well being of all the children in their care. Boarders said that they feel very safe when boarding at the school and are sure that the staff will keep them safe at all times. Boarders could all identify an adult who they would go to if they felt unsafe.

There is a clear policy and procedure for countering bullying. Boarders' said that bullying is not an issue and that any problems between boarders are always dealt with by staff. Staff are aware of cyber bullying and are vigilant regarding relationships between the boarders. For example, they have a very good knowledge of which boarders' have personality clashes with others and have strategies in place to manage these.

There is an effective and comprehensive approach to managing behaviour at the school. This means that staff are consistent and fair in dealing with unwanted behaviours. Parents commented that the behaviour of their child has improved since they started boarding at the school. The boarders often present behaviour that challenges the staff and staff were observed to be calm and consistent in their approach. Physical restraint is used only as a last resort, and incidences are minimal. Boarders say sanctions are fairly given and they understand why they are given. The recording of sanctions does not detail if the young person agrees with the sanction or their views. There is a reward system for positive behaviour. For example, there is a boarder of the week award that is highly prized by the boarders. Boarders knew

what they had to achieve to receive rewards, such as kindness to another boarder or helpfulness to staff. This means that all boarders have an equal chance of achieving rewards, regardless of their diverse ability levels.

The school has an excellent approach towards risk management. This approach enables the boarders to take reasonable risks while keeping them safe. For example, staff encourage boarders' to learn to make a cup of tea, while ensuring that they are safe from the boiling water. Risk assessments are in place for individuals, outings and the building. This ensures that staff know what actions to take to help to ensure the safety of the boarders. The staff are keen to ensure that all systems regarding the safety of the boarders is constantly monitored and updated. For example, a member of staff has taken on the responsibility of reviewing the whole of the risk management system at the school in order to ensure that it continues to be robust and effective.

Staff recruitment systems are extremely robust and thorough. Staff are only permitted to begin work in the school once the appropriate checks and references have been received. This ensures that only suitable people are able to work with the boarders. There is a very effective system for monitoring visitors to the school to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff are aware of procedures and actions to take should a boarder be missing but there has been no incidents of a boarder being missing from the school. Fire drills take place on a regular basis and boarders knew what action to take in the event of a fire. By promoting this knowledge, staff ensure that boarder's safety will be promoted in the event of a fire.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The management of boarding and organisation of boarding is good. There is a clear development plan in place that addresses the identified weaknesses in the provision of the boarding aspect of the school that is time limited and clearly focussed. This plan will ensure that improved outcomes are achieved by boarders' at the school. Diverse needs are catered for sensitively and this results in fair and equal treatment for all boarders and an atmosphere of tolerance and respect.

The boarding house is very well run and daily routines run smoothly. Boarders' benefit from a consistent and committed staff team who have good opportunities for professional development and who are well supported and supervised. This means that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staff feel confident to undertake their roles and think that the range of training available, including training in restraint, autism, first aid and safeguarding children helps them to support the boarders effectively.

The school maintains very good links with parents and provides comprehensive information for them. Parents comment that the boarding staff are always available



to support them with any concerns or difficulties that they have regarding their child. Boarders and parents know how to make a complaint but none have needed to. However, they felt that if they did make a complaint they felt confident that the Head of Care would resolve any issues to their satisfaction.

Evaluation of the care is undertaken by the Head Teacher and the Head of Care. They are very aware of their strengths and weaknesses and have plans in place to address the weaknesses. Boarders are able to contribute their views of boarding at the regular boarders' meetings. Any concerns or ideas are addressed and results fed back at the next meeting. Boarders thought there was nothing that the staff could do to make boarding any better, apart from 'the staff should put lots of chocolate in all of the bedrooms!'

An independent visitor, who is also a Governor of the school, visits each term to view the boarding house and speak with the boarders. However, there is not currently a formal visiting procedure in place each half term that evaluates the quality of the care given and makes actions for improvements.

There is a commitment to driving forward improvement at the school. At the previous inspection the school was asked to ensure the effectiveness of the pay phone as a point of contact available to family and friends of the boarders. The system has been reviewed and there is now school mobile telephones available that families and friends can call to speak with the boarders. The school's website is now maintained in a way that ensures key school statements and policies are available and up to date.

## **National minimum standards**

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- . ensure that when outcomes for boarders are evaluated that this is documented in care plans.
- . ensure that boarders' are encouraged to have their views recorded in the record of sanctions.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



10/10/2011

Dear boarders

### **Inspection of Pencalenick Residential Special School**

Thank you for all of your help during the inspection when I visited the boarding house and spoke to you and the staff who look after you.

I think that you are very well cared for and are helped to be as independent as possible which will help you when you leave school.

I liked your bedrooms and the way you can put posters on your walls that you like. It was good to see that you all get on well and help each other. You said that you liked the food and didn't mind that while the kitchen is being changed you eat in another room. You said that you liked the trips out of the school when you are boarding, especially the fishing and shopping trips.

I have asked that someone visits the boarding house every half term to make sure that everything is just right and that you are happy. Also that if the staff sanction you then your opinion about the sanction is written down.

I really enjoyed meeting you and thanks again for your help with the inspection.  
Yours sincerely

Tina Maddison  
Inspector

Yours sincerely,

Christina Maddison