

# Southfield School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

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**Inspector** Anna Williams

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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**

Southfield School is a maintained secondary school for boys, aged 11 to 16 years, who have experienced behavioural and emotional difficulties. It accommodates up to 69 pupils, at any one time, 16 of whom may be resident in the residential provision. The residential accommodation is provided within an area of the main school site. Southfield School is situated in a residential area, near to Wokingham town centre. The residential provision was last inspected in July 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                             | good        |
| Leadership and management of the residential provision | good        |

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- This residential provision provides residential pupils with a good boarding experience.
- Residential pupils enjoy their time at the residential provision and feel safe.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective in keeping residential pupils safe.
- Residential pupils build confidence, make good progress educationally, socially and emotionally through their boarding experience.
- Parents and carers are unanimously positive about the good quality of care in the residential provision.
- Diversity is well-celebrated within the residential provision, through individual residential pupil's placement plans, and in everyday care.
- All national minimum standards relating to residential special schools are met.
- Minor shortfalls in recruitment were immediately addressed during the inspection. This did not impact negatively on residential pupils.
- Residential pupils know who their independent adult is. However, they do not have contact details for them, so that they may contact them directly with any concerns or comments.
- Placement plans are individualised and describe the day-to-day care of each residential pupil. However, they are not reviewed regularly.
- Since the last inspection, the residential provision has fully addressed the one previous recommendation relating to record keeping around residential pupils

who are reported missing.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Residential pupils in this school achieve good outcomes. Residential pupils speak positively of their boarding and school experience. They build good relationships with a stable residential staff team. Residential pupils value the key person system and regular time spent with their allocated worker. This ensures they have specific time with staff to discuss their goals and individual needs. Comments from residential pupils include 'I love it at the hostel. I see my friends and do lots of activities I have never done before' and 'It's good here. Staff are really nice. They always help you if you need it.'

Relationships between residential pupils are positive. They feel relaxed and safe within the residential provision. Behaviour shown within the residential provision is generally good. This supports an inclusive environment where all residential pupils engage well in working towards targets and goals.

Some residential pupils have made significant progress in reducing anxiety and gaining confidence. This has benefited them both educationally and socially. Some residential pupils are engaging with anger management programmes. This has successfully reduced the amount of negative behaviours shown. Residential pupils who are part of the residential council have built confidence in speaking out for themselves and on behalf of other pupils. This promotes personal and social development. Some residential pupils have made good progress in achieving personal hygiene goals. This supports their health and self-confidence. Some residential pupils' attendance at school has improved since boarding. This promotes their educational outcomes.

Residential pupils speak positively about learning life skills through the boarding experience. They engage well in tasks such as laying tables, making beds, laundry, budgeting and food preparation. As a result, they are well-prepared for life away from the school.

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

The residential provision provides residential pupils with a good quality of care. Residential pupils speak positively about their boarding experience. Comments from parents and carers include 'the hostel has just been brilliant for my son. He has grown in confidence since staying there', and 'boarding has helped my son stay focused on his education. I cannot fault the care given by the residential staff. I have full confidence in them to keep him safe and well.' Residential pupils successfully maintain contact with family, friends and those who are significant to them while accessing the residential provision.

Links between academic and residential staff are strong. The effective promotion of the 24 hour curriculum enhances outcomes and achievements of residential pupils. A recent pilot scheme offered outreach support to some residential pupils through holiday periods. This offers the residential pupils a link with school through extended holiday breaks. The impact of this scheme is still being evaluated, although initial feedback is positive from residential pupils and families. This proactive approach to 24 hour learning opportunities means residential pupils make good progress in education and social development. Arrangements for the induction of new residential pupils are thorough and effective.

Medication administration is safe and effective. Residential pupils who self-administer medication are risk assessed as safe to do so. Staff actively and successfully encourage residential pupils to follow a healthy and active lifestyle. Residential pupils engage with regular school nurse drop-in clinics. These offer opportunities for pupils to access advice and guidance on a wide variety of topics such as smoking, sexual health advice and diet. This allows residential pupils the chance to ask questions in a safe environment about a wide range of health topics. Residential pupils' emotional health is well-supported through a variety of professional support services including a counselling service, anger management programme and art therapy. The quality of the food within the residential provision is good. Most residential pupils speak positively of the catering arrangements. This good practice ensures individual health and emotional needs are identified and fully met.

Residential pupils' views about the residential provision are captured through residential council meetings. Through these consultations, they have seen change in menus, the decoration of the accommodation, activities, and equipment purchased for bedrooms. Residential meetings are conducted in an inclusive and orderly manner. This demonstrates to residential pupils that every pupil's views are valued and listened to.

The individual needs of residential pupils are outlined in placement plans. These address the unique needs of each residential pupil, and how they will be met. While detailed, these plans are not regularly reviewed to demonstrate progress or amendment following significant incidents. This risks staff referring to out-of-date information.

Residential pupils benefit from accommodation which is maintained to a good standard. Bath and showering facilities are suitable for the number of residential pupils and are clean and hygienic. Residential pupils each have their own single bedroom. They personalize their own space with posters, photos and store their belongings safely. Communal lounge areas are small. However, residential pupils have sole access to a large games room which holds computers, table football, pool and a television with games console. Residential pupils speak positively of this space. Outside of school hours, residential pupils use some school facilities with appropriate supervision and support, such as the multi-gym. Residential pupils are encouraged and engage in a good variety of extra-curricular activities. This offers residential

pupils opportunities to make new friends, try new experiences and learn new skills. Photos of pupils taking part in these activities are displayed through the school. This allows residential pupils the chance to reflect on and share their achievements with others around the school.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The school's arrangements are good for ensuring pupils are safe and protected from harm. The school gives a high priority to the safety and well-being of residential pupils. Residential pupils feel safe staying in the provision. The annual 'anti-bullying survey' captures feedback from all school pupils about bullying issues. The school proactively uses the anonymous feedback to carefully and sensitively address any areas of concern. Changes have been made to the deployment of staff across the site to ensure that 'hot spots' of concern raised by pupils are addressed. Residential pupils do not identify bullying as an issue. Any homophobic or derogatory comments made by residential pupils are suitably challenged. A 'respect all' ethos is promoted. Consequently, residential pupils feel safe and identify adults they would talk to if worried. However, the residential pupils do not have relevant details to contact their independent adult directly. This does not support residential pupils speaking out freely to an adult outside of the school, although the details of external helplines are appropriately displayed.

The school appropriately shares information with the Local Authority Designated Officer. Staff undertake regular safeguarding refresher training. This includes residential staff, and all staff across the school site including maintenance and catering personnel. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and protocols. This promotes the safety of residential pupils.

The incidents of residential pupils reported missing are low. Staff take appropriate action and follow agreed local police missing procedures. Residential pupils are responded to positively on their return and appropriate de-briefs take place. This ensures that the reasons behind why a residential pupil may have gone missing and where they have been is suitably addressed and recorded. This promotes their welfare.

Residential staff are trained in behaviour management. This training is regularly refreshed. This ensures that residential pupils are cared for by competent staff whose knowledge is kept up-to-date. Behaviour management strategies are consistently and fairly applied within the residential provision. The use of restraint within residential time is low. Detailed records are kept in line with guidance and are regularly monitored. This ensures that incidents are regularly evaluated to ensure a fair and reasonable approach.

The school recruitment policy outlines the process to follow to ensure robust safe recruitment. However, minor shortfalls in personnel files identified on inspection demonstrate that the recruitment policy has not been followed completely.

Immediate action taken on inspection fully addressed the shortfalls highlighted. This did not impact negatively on residential pupils.

Residential pupils benefit from well-maintained and safe premises and accommodation. Regular health and safety checks of gas, electric and water facilities ensures the safety of residential pupils and all who access the site. Residential pupils know what to do in case of emergency and take part in regular fire drills, including overnight. Consequently, they are regularly refreshed on important procedures and this supports them to keep safe. The site has benefited from the addition of enhanced security fencing, a side gate, and the addition of site speed bumps. This supports a safe and appropriately secure environment for residential pupils.

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

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good. This ensures that the boarding house provides residential pupils with good support and they are well-cared for. The effective organisation of the residential provision creates a safe and orderly environment where residential pupils thrive. Senior management work successfully with the residential staff to ensure the aims and objectives of the residential provision are fulfilled.

Self-evaluation systems highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The school development plan highlights specific areas of improvement for the residential provision. This drives forward enhancements to the residential provision which benefits residential pupils.

Internal monitoring systems by senior management are strong. This ensures that records are regularly scrutinised to maintain a good quality of care. Management monitoring also addresses compliance with policies and procedures within the residential provision. This regular analysis is successful at maintaining an orderly and safe residential community. Independent monitoring visits take place within timescales and are appropriately challenging. Recent negative feedback about catering was addressed swiftly. This learning from feedback and monitoring demonstrates a commitment to proactively improve the residential provision.

Parents and carers say that the residential staff are excellent at keeping them up-to-date with progress and developments. Parents and carers value the regular home visits undertaken by residential staff. Comments from parents and carers include 'I appreciate the hostel staff coming into my home and discussing with me directly the care of my son. It shows my son that we are all working together', and 'I find the home visits from hostel staff really useful. We discuss behaviour strategies to help me at home. It has meant that we have all had a consistent approach with my son. My son's behaviour has improved enormously.'

Residential staff are well-supported by senior management through regular supervision, appraisal and team meetings. This provides staff with regular



opportunities to reflect on practice and to discuss together the needs of the residential pupils. Staff training needs are identified and met. Recent training has included fire safety, substance abuse and challenging behaviour. This ensures residential pupils are cared for by suitably trained staff.

Residential pupils' individual records capture appropriately their time in the residential provision. They are stored securely. Issues around the culture and background of residential pupils are appropriately addressed within these placement plans, and fully met. Residential pupils sign and record their own views on documents relating to them. This positively promotes their voice with their own case records.

Senior management successfully encourage residential pupils to share their views about the residential provision through council meetings or occasional questionnaires. This demonstrates to residential pupils that their views are valued and they can influence the running of the provision. Positively, there have been no complaints about the residential provision since the last inspection.

A previous recommendation to improve record keeping around residential pupils who have been reported missing has been fully met. This ensures that records of a residential pupil's time in the provision are complete and accurate.

## **National minimum standards**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

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

- ensure that any application form or reference discrepancy is identified and addressed prior to a member of staff starting work, in compliance with the school recruitment policy.
- ensure that residential pupils know how to directly contact their independent adult.
- ensure that placement plans are regularly reviewed.

**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.**



01/10/2012

Dear pupil,

### **Inspection of Southfield School**

I came to inspect the residential provision recently. Thank you for talking with me. It is really important to hear your views on living in the hostel. I enjoyed playing pool and football, and spending time meeting everyone. I was pleased to be able to observe a residential council meeting. The residential provision gives you good care.

You feel safe living in the hostel. You like the activities which you can do in the evenings like the go-kart, swimming or on-site games. It was good to see the activity week photos on display. Your bedroom space is well decorated, and you personalise it your own way. Staff make sure your health and medication needs are all met. School nurse drop in sessions offer you the chance to get advice and support about lots of things like sexual health or smoking. You learn life skills through tasks such as tables, and making your bed. Your views are heard and you have seen changes happen, such as the purchase of the smart television in the games room.

There are some things the residential provision could do better. Senior staff must make sure that all school policies are followed in full. One policy was not followed correctly. However, school staff put things right during the inspection.

You know who your independent visitor is. However, you do not have their contact details to contact them directly if you had a worry or concern. The school will make sure that you will have this information.

You each have a placement plan. This plan is about you and contains important information about your everyday needs. Staff will make sure that these plans are kept up-to-date. This will make sure staff have the correct information about you.

Overall, you stay in a residential provision which gives you a good standard of care.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Williams

