

Sunnydown School

Sunnydown School, Whyteleafe Road, CATERHAM, Surrey, CR3 5ED

Inspection dates	01/10/2013 to 03/10/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Pupils flourish and are happy in an environment where they benefit from highly individualised, sensitive and nurturing care provided by an experienced and committed staff team. They make significant progress in their social skills, confidence, self-esteem and independence skills, which impacts extremely positively on their academic progress.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils and model respect, acceptance and warm regard. Pupils respond positively to the respect and trust shown to them so they feel valued and held in esteem. They trust the adults who care for them and are able to benefit from their support and guidance. Positive behaviour management is a clear strength. Pupils respond to a culture of promoting and recognising achievement and their behaviour is excellent.
- Pupils are extremely positive about their residential experience. The 24-hour curriculum provides stimulating and challenging activities which extend and enrich their social experiences and provide opportunities for them to develop new skills and interests.
- Robust safeguarding procedures ensure pupils are protected. The welfare of pupils underpins all practices within the residential provision. Pupils are confident that they are safe and parents have no concerns about their safety.
- Forward-thinking managers lead a highly skilled staff team who continually strive to make improvements to further enrich the pupils' residential experience.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours notice of the inspection. Both residential facilities were visited. Meetings took place with the residential pupils, headteacher, head of care, deputy head of care, bursar, safeguarding officer, the care staff team, chair of governors, two parents and the external visitor. Other inspection activities included: two evening meals taken with residential pupils; observation of parents' induction evening; observation of independence training evening activity; examination of key records and policies; and examination of surveys and school questionnaires.

Inspection team

Janet Hunnam

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

This is a residential and day school for boys aged 11 to 16 years, who have an emotional or learning difficulty. The school is fully maintained by the local authority and currently has 82 pupils, of whom 34 are 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. The school is situated in a residential area in Caterham. It was last inspected in May 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the policy and procedure for pupils going missing makes clear reference to its compatibility with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures applicable to the local area.
- Ensure all policies are updated and reviewed in line with the published review date.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils choose to reside at the school and speak very positively about their residential experience. They thrive, flourish and thoroughly enjoy their time in the residential setting. A pupil commented, 'I just love it.' A parent commented that the provision is, 'absolutely fantastic and my son is a much happier child'. Another commented, 'I think the school has worked excellent magic on my son.'

Residential pupils make remarkable personal development and progress. Parents comment that their son is, 'a different child', and that there is, 'a massive improvement in all areas'. Pupils develop confidence, social skills, meaningful friendships and achieve very good academic progress. Extremely strong relationships are the foundation of the support and care pupils receive, together with consistent routines and boundaries. Consequently, pupils develop trust in the adults who guide and care for them and they respond positively to the support offered. The ethos of the residential provision includes acceptance and respect for each other. Pupils are tolerant and supportive of each other within a strong community culture.

There is a strong focus on developing independence skills and preparing pupils for leaving school and the next stage of their life. Residential staff fully integrate the Fit 4 Life programme into the 24-hour curriculum. All pupils participate in this programme at a level and pace appropriate to their individual needs. Pupils make significant progress in this area and parents comment, 'he seems to do tasks he would never do before', and another commented, 'he has gained confidence in his ability to look after himself and do things for himself'. Pupils are developing life skills that will positively affect them as they become young adults.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care at the school is outstanding. Pupils who choose to become boarders benefit from highly individualised, sensitive and nurturing care provided by an experienced and committed staff team. Induction to boarding is well planned, taking into consideration the specific needs of the pupil and the requirements of the larger group, ensuring pupils achieve a successful and confident introduction to new routines. Staff provide perceptive support during the initial residential period, with close liaison with the family to help the pupil settle in to residential life. Parents comment that communication is 'excellent' and staff 'have an excellent understanding of my son's needs'. Staff frequently contact parents, not just when they have concerns, but also when a pupil has made progress, however small the step.

The school views the residential service as integral to its provision. Effective and cohesive links across the school ensure education and residential staff share information. Such an approach leads to pupils receiving consistent support and guidance in all areas of school life. Parents and pupils comment extremely positively about residential staff. Parents' comments include, 'staff really do care and are passionate about meeting pupils' needs', and, 'all care staff offer such fantastic support to parents and children'. Pupils commented, 'staff are like a second mum', 'know us very well', and, 'everyone is really kind to me and I love boarding. I feel like I'm at home'.

An innovative approach to care planning fully involves pupils. Each pupil has a care book, which includes 'all about me' information with individual targets. Pupils update their care book daily and care staff review these plans weekly with comments on their progress. Pupils are enthusiastic about this new system and are eager to improve.

Pupils have access to a stimulating and wide range of activities. Pupils report, 'there is always something to do', and confirm there is a choice of activities to suit everyone's individual interests.

They positively engage in leisure pursuits both on site and in the wider community. They also participate in clubs in the community such as a cricket club, youth club and athletic club. Consequently, they extend and enrich their social experiences and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, there are opportunities to develop their leadership and interpersonal skills by taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Parents comment that their son, 'does so many more activities through boarding', and another commented how they are, 'thrilled and appreciate the support and range of experiences that boarding has opened up for our son'.

The health of residential pupils has a high priority. Staff receive training to ensure they fully support the health needs of pupils and any specific medical requirements. All staff are competent in administering medication and managers robustly monitor the system. Staff have an excellent understanding of the pupils' needs and respond to their emotional needs with warmth and sensitivity. A pupil stated, 'staff don't like us to be sad and they sort things out'.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy the food on offer, which is healthy, nutritious and varied. Meal times are social occasions where pupils interact appropriately with staff and their peers. Special dietary requirements are very well catered for. Pupils describe the food as, 'great', and parents appreciate the varied menu, enabling the pupils to try new food.

Accommodation for pupils is comfortable, homely and well maintained with an on-going programme of decoration and refurbishment. There are suitable communal spaces for relaxation. Individual bedroom spaces have sufficient storage for personal possessions and pupils are encouraged to personalise their areas, giving them a sense of identity.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements in place to ensure pupils are safe and protected from harm are outstanding. A parent stated, 'my son is very safe', and pupils report they feel safe at the school. Pupils have access to adults other than staff to talk to if they are worried about anything but pupils are confident in approaching staff with any concerns. A pupil stated, 'I can tell staff anything', and, 'the staff are always here for me'.

Safeguarding pupils is a priority. Recruitment processes are robust. The school rigorously checks adults to ensure they are appropriate to work with children. Clear policies and procedures reflect the vulnerabilities of pupils and these, together with up-to-date training, fully support staff to provide excellent safeguarding measures. All staff receive appropriate child protection training. The head of care is suitably qualified and experienced, and is the designated child protection lead officer. Staff are confident in their safeguarding role and alert in recognising causes for concern and taking appropriate action to protect pupils.

Staff take bullying seriously and pupils report that incidents are rare. A pupil stated, 'if it happens, it is dealt with straight away'. Pupils do not leave the site without permission but procedures are in place for staff to take prompt action to protect pupils should this occur. However, the procedures do not make it clear that they are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures applicable to the local area.

Promoting positive behaviour is a clear strength of the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils and model respect, acceptance and warm regard. The atmosphere within the residential provision is friendly, relaxed and informal, with pupils responding positively to the respect and trust shown to them so they feel valued and held in esteem. Consequently, their behaviour is excellent and they distinctly benefit from such positive relationships with staff and their peers. Recognising and rewarding achievement is inherent in the culture and pupils are excited by the 'Star of the Week' reward system. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management but

respond to all instances of negative behaviour without the necessity for physical intervention. Staff have not used physical intervention for over seven years. They also use sanctions infrequently.

Staff effectively monitor the safety of the residential provision. They regularly implement a range of health and safety checks, fire safety checks and fire drills. Risk assessments are rigorous but do not limit pupils from engaging fully in activities and leisure pursuits.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

Leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, guiding staff and pupils to achieve excellent progress. The dynamic head of care works closely and collaboratively with the senior management team, and all staff view the residential provision as a valuable and integral part of the school, central in advancing pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development. The head of care leads a stable, knowledgeable staff team who continually strive to enhance the care and welfare of pupils. Pupils benefit from clear, consistent routines and boundaries, which contribute to their feeling of safety. Staff know the pupils and their families very well, enabling them to provide highly individualised, nurturing care, support and guidance.

Staffing levels are sufficient to provide high quality care. Staff receive regular supervision with additional on-going informal guidance and discussion. Appropriate training further supports them to undertake their roles effectively.

The head of care regularly monitors residential provision, which ensures the service continues to evolve to provide opportunities for pupils to develop and make progress. An external visitor visits each half term and provides a written report, which, together with reports following governors' visits, further underpin evaluation of the service to maintain high standards of care. The head of care is passionate about not just maintaining high quality care, but is committed to improving the standard of care to support pupils' progress. The recent introduction of care books in which pupils fully engage with setting their goals and reviewing their targets daily, is an excellent example of her forward-looking approach to benefit pupils. The school has addressed the action points from the previous inspection.

Complaints procedures are effective, with highly visible information around the school for pupils to know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern. This information includes contact details for the pupil advocate and external visitor. Pupils have a child-friendly booklet explaining the complaints procedure with contact information. The school has not received any formal complaints from pupils since the last inspection. Pupils are aware of this process and the pupil advocate and external visitor are well known to them. However, pupils are confident that they can speak to staff about any worries and that staff will listen and respond to their views. Staff make every effort to consult pupils, listen to their views and opinions, explore their ideas and put them into practice. Residential pupils have a forum, which meets regularly to discuss aspects of residential life. Pupils complete questionnaires as a further avenue of consultation. The open culture ensures staff take the views of pupils into account throughout their care. The school has received one complaint since the last inspection, which was thoroughly investigated.

Pupils have a wide range of diverse and complex needs, which the staff team fully address. Staff are acutely aware of the specific vulnerabilities of pupils and work tirelessly to ensure pupils feel valued and respected through positive individualised input. Parents report excellent communication from the staff team. All key records and policies are in place. However, some policies require minor updating.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	125458
Social care unique reference number	SC013896
DfE registration number	936/7014

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.

Type of school	Maintained
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr M Armstrong
Date of previous boarding inspection	01/05/2012
Telephone number	01883 342281

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