

# Meadows School

London Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN4 0RJ

**Inspection dates** 25/02/2014 to 27/02/2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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

- Extremely positive, sensitive and nurturing relationships with experienced and committed staff enable pupils to trust adults who care for them and benefit from their support and guidance. Staff work together effectively to meet pupils' holistic needs.
- Pupils thrive in an environment where staff recognise and value their individual strengths and unique qualities. They make excellent progress in relation to their starting points in managing their emotions and significant personal development in their social skills, confidence and self-esteem. The residential provision is an integral part of the school and central in advancing pupil's academic, personal, social and emotional development.
- Pupils make huge strides in their emotional maturity and emotional literacy due to the close attention paid to their emotional and psychological well-being. Led by a clinical psychologist, pupils' individual psychological needs are identified and strategies implemented to support their development. Pupils and their families recognise significant improvements.
- Robust safeguarding practice ensures pupils are safe. New initiatives in relation to pupils being safe when using the internet include training for staff, educating pupils and raising parents' and carers' awareness of on-line safety.
- Pupils benefit from dynamic, passionate leadership and a strongly committed staff team. The school is continually evolving to meet pupils' needs with a developing focus on supporting parents and carers.

### 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 and half hours notice of the inspection. Both residential houses were visited. Three meals were taken with residential pupils, two in houses and the inspector spent time with residential pupils in each house on two evenings. Meetings took place with the headteacher, head of care, care staff, clinical psychologist, governor, catering manager, bursar and residential pupils. Policies, records and documents were examined.

## Inspection team

Janet Hunnam

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Meadows School is a non-maintained residential special school, owned by Barnardo's children's charity. At the time of the inspection there were 56 pupils on roll aged 9 to 19 years, with 13 pupils who reside at the school during the week, 10 boys and 3 girls. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses, the boys' house is located within the school grounds and the girls in a house within walking distance of the school. The school is situated in Southborough, Kent, close to the town of Tunbridge Wells and caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- implement systems which enable managers to respond promptly to issues raised through the pupil council
- ensure the independent visitor has easy access to records held electronically to monitor the conduct of the residential provision effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils thrive within a nurturing and supportive environment where they develop their confidence and self-esteem. They enjoy exceptionally good quality relationships with staff and enjoy being in the company of staff who respond to them with warmth and good humour. Consequently, residential pupils listen to staff and accept the support staff offer, enabling them to make significant progress in relation to their starting points. A parent commented that their child has made, 'incredible progress and come a long way.' Another commented, 'the residential provision has been the best thing for their child and it has really helped them.' Residential pupils are developing constructive, tolerant peer relationships with an understanding of appropriate social skills. Residential pupils acknowledge their own positive development since being at the school. One pupil commented, 'I have definitely changed. I was always naughty and not a nice person. Now I am much better behaved.'

Residential pupils report extremely positively on their experience. They enjoy a wide range of enriching activities enabling them to participate in new leisure pursuits and follow their personal interests. Staff encourage residential pupils to engage in activities in the local community such as youth clubs and dance classes, which develops their self-confidence and social engagement. Parents report that residential pupils are 'always doing something' and are 'always busy'. Residential pupils are able to make choices on a daily basis in relation to their evening activities. This approach ensures that staff consider their individual preferences and residential pupils develop their own sense of identity.

Residential pupils flourish within a setting where they are valued as individuals and where their views are appreciated. All residential pupils have a key worker who consults with them on an individual basis but they also report that they can approach any member of staff. Staff, including senior managers, are extremely responsive to everyone. Residential pupils clearly appreciate the informal interaction from all staff, which bolsters their self-confidence and sense of appreciation. Residential pupils are able to put forward their views through their representatives on the pupil council, where they make an important contribution to school life. However, residential pupils report that managers are not always prompt in their response to issues raised through the pupil council. Recent proposals from the pupil council have resulted in an additional water cooler, amendments to the lunchtime menu and improvements in Wi-Fi provision. Additionally, each residential house has regular meetings where all residents can put forward their views and make suggestions regarding their day-to-day life within the house. Residential pupils actively engage in these meetings making positive suggestions and constructive comments to improve their residential experience. Residential pupils are confident that staff take their views seriously.

Residential pupils benefit from having their physical and emotional health promoted to an excellent standard. They have their medical needs met and receive support from specialist health professionals where needed, such as speech and language therapy, input from a clinical psychologist, counsellor and specialist community health professionals.

There is a strong focus on preparing residential pupils for their next stage. Developing daily living and independence skills begins at an early stage, at a level and pace which takes into account their individual abilities and vulnerabilities. Structured programmes develop their skills and provide opportunities to build their confidence so that they are fully prepared for their transition from the school.

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Excellent support by an experienced, stable and committed staff team provides nurturing, sensitive and highly individualised care. Parents report that 'staff are very supportive' and the residential experience has 'been fantastic for their child'. Induction for new residential pupils is tailored to their needs, with an emphasis on each individual feeling comfortable and happy in the residential environment. Home visits by staff ensure staff have a comprehensive picture of the residential pupil's needs and the support they require. Education and care staff work closely together and communicate effectively ensuring residential pupils receive continuity and consistency of approach.

Staff know the residential pupils extremely well. This is reflected in thorough and detailed care plans, which specifically identify their needs in all areas and strategies to support their progress and development. Residential pupils are involved in their care planning process, working with staff to set their own targets and review their progress. Parents and carers are also involved in this process. Staff send them the care plans so they can actively support and encourage them to achieve their targets. Through this process, residential pupils are aware of their own development and are able to acknowledge progress. In a group discussion, a residential pupil was struggling to recognise the progress they had made. Another older residential pupil said it for them, acknowledging how difficult other pupils within the school had found their behaviour when they first came and how it had changed so much for the better. The residential pupil beamed with this positive feedback from one of their peers. From their starting points, residential pupils make significant progress in all aspects of their lives, enhancing their future life chances.

Residential pupils are enthusiastic about the activities offered and engage in a wide range of leisure pursuits both on-site and in the wider community. They choose what activities they participate in according to their personal interests, enriching their social experiences. Residential pupils are not restricted to group participation and are encouraged to pursue individual interests.

Arrangements to meet health needs ensure residential pupils receive appropriate support. Staff receive training to administer medication safely and to administer first aid. The system for the administration of medication is robust. Staff receive specialist training to meet the specific health needs of residential pupils ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to provide specialist care when needed. The emotional and psychological health of all pupils has a high priority. A clinical psychologist works in the school one day a week providing specialist support for staff in relation to understanding all pupils' behaviour, directly working with pupils and supporting staff to implement consistent support strategies. The school is continuing to develop this support, implementing resilience programmes to develop all pupils' coping strategies to manage their own emotions and improve their behaviour. A holistic approach, including residential and school staff, their family and others involved with the individual, ensure consistent strategies are in place to support residential pupils and promote positive outcomes.

Residential pupils enjoy the food on offer, which is healthy and varied. Special dietary needs are catered for. Meal times are well-ordered, sociable occasions both within the school at lunchtime and in the houses during the evenings. Staff encourage residential pupils to lead an active, healthy lifestyle joining them in bicycle rides and physical activities.

Residential pupils live in spacious, well-maintained and very comfortable accommodation of an excellent standard. Residential pupils have their own bedrooms, which reflect their own personalities and interests and give them a sense of belonging and self-identity.

Residential pupils report they are able to contact their families easily. Parents report that communication with staff is excellent. Staff telephone them on a Monday to find out how their child has enjoyed their weekend and again on a Friday to report on their week at school. Staff

inform parents and carers promptly of anything significant.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

### **Outstanding**

The arrangements in place to ensure residential pupils receive safe care and are protected from harm are outstanding. Residential pupils report they feel safe and parents confirm they have no concerns regarding their safety.

Safeguarding pupils is a priority. Recruitment processes are robust ensuring that only adults who have been checked as being suitable to work with children are employed. 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 the designated child protection officer. Staff are confident in their safeguarding role and alert to recognising causes for concern and taking proper action to protect all pupils.

Pupils report that bullying is not a problem and is taken very seriously by staff. The school has recently implemented a programme to raise awareness of on-line safety. Staff complete a course to enable them to recognise the issues pupils face on-line and their role in protecting and educating pupils. In addition to educating pupils on the safe use of the internet, the school also provides information to support parents and carers to raise their awareness of potential danger and their responsibilities in keeping their children safe. Appropriate policies, procedures and protocols with the local police are in place to protect pupils when they leave the site without permission, though incidents are not frequent.

Promoting positive behaviour is a clear strength of the school. Expectations of appropriate behaviour are clear, based on respect for others, the environment and making good choices in how all pupils themselves behave. Individual, detailed risk assessments and crisis management plans identify each residential pupil's specific vulnerabilities and strategies to support them when they are experiencing difficulties and presenting challenging behaviour. Staff receive in-depth training in de-escalation strategies and physical intervention is rare. Staff apply sanctions appropriately to underline the notion to pupils of taking responsibility for their actions and residential pupils report they are applied fairly. Residential pupils are benefitting from positive relationships with staff and learning to self-regulate their behaviour in a very positive manner. A residential pupil commented, 'I am not as bad as I was, I am not so violent.' Another commented, 'My behaviour has improved dramatically and I am now making the right choices.'

Safety of the residential provision is monitored effectively. A range of health and safety checks and fire safety checks are carried out regularly including fire drills for residential pupils. Risk assessments are kept up to date. The security of the site is closely monitored. Comprehensive systems are in place to protect residential pupils and staff.

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

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. Managers share a common understanding of the ethos of the school, which they communicate effectively to all pupils, staff and parents. Led by a committed and experienced head of care, the residential staff team provide residential pupils with support enabling them to recognise their inappropriate behaviour, make informed choices and take responsibility for their actions. The head of school, head of education and head of care work closely together to ensure the residential provision is fully integrated into the school and is central in advancing residential pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development.

Experienced, well-trained staff continually strive to enhance the care and welfare of pupils. Residential pupils benefit from clear, well-known structures, routines and boundaries, which contribute to them feeling safe. Staff know the residential pupils and their families very well enabling them to provide highly individualised care, support and guidance. High staffing levels allow for individual and group needs to be fully met. Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. Communication and information sharing amongst staff is excellent, resulting in prompt interventions to support residential pupils, ensuring a consistently high standard of care. Residential pupils benefit from a staff team who undertake extensive training and e-learning opportunities to ensure they have the skills to effectively support their complex needs.

The head of care regularly monitors residential provision, ensuring the service continues to evolve to provide opportunities for residential pupils to develop and make progress. An external, independent person visits every half-term, further underpinning the monitoring and evaluation of the provision to maintain high standards. Access to electronic records is not straightforward for the visitor. The visitor requires easy access to both paper and electronic records to monitor the provision efficiently. The school is continually developing to meet pupils' and their parents' needs. An example is the extension of the counselling service to work with all pupils and their parents to provide support in assisting families in helping them to manage their child's behaviour.

Parents report that communication with staff is excellent with staff routinely telephoning them to share information and keep families updated on residential pupils' progress. Complaints are infrequent and any concerns raised are dealt with appropriately through the complaints procedure. Residential pupils are aware of how they can make a complaint but because of their trusting relationships with staff and their confidence in approaching staff, concerns are dealt with promptly without resort to formal procedures.

Residential pupils have a wide range of diverse and complex needs, which the staff team address fully. Staff are aware of the specific vulnerabilities of pupils and work to ensure that all residential pupils feel valued and respected.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119029
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC024060
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/7011

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	56
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	9 to 19
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mike Price
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	04/02/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 529 144

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