

Sky College

Sky College, Pickeridge Close, TAUNTON, Somerset, TA2 7HW

Inspection dates 25/03/2014 to 26/03/2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	52
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Parents, carers and residential pupils all hold the boarding provision of the school in very high regard. The overall impact of the boarding experience for residential pupils is very positive. Residential pupils develop independence, self-esteem, confidence, aspirations to succeed and a sense of self-worth.
- Relationships between residential pupils and staff are very positive. The views of residential pupils are fully taken into account in the day to day running of the boarding house. This provides residential pupils with a sense of ownership and a sense that their opinions and views are valued.
- safeguarding systems and procedures are outstanding. Residential pupils said they feel very safe when staying in the boarding house. The school has excellent working relationships with external agencies to ensure any concerns or issues are robustly addressed to ensure the safety of residential pupils. Staff know individual residential pupils very well and are aware of any change in their behaviour that may indicate something is worrying them. Residential pupils trust staff and are able to speak to them about any safeguarding concerns.
- The boarding house is very well organised and benefits from strong leadership and management. The well trained and supervised staff team are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are fully aware of how best to meet the diverse and complex needs of the residential pupils to ensure they all achieve positive outcomes.

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 contacted by telephone on the morning of the first day of the inspection. Activities undertaken during the inspection were speaking with students, staff, parents, the head teacher and teaching staff. A tour of the boarding house was undertaken, no responses from parent view or surveys were returned. Scrutiny of school policies, procedures, care plans, risk assessments and recruitment files was undertaken.

Inspection team

Christina Maddison

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The school is a local authority provision for boys who are subject to a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is located on the outskirts of Taunton. The boarding house is attached to the school and operates as a separate provision. Boarding is used flexibly to meet individual needs and can offer an extended school day for a small number of pupils. Pupils can board up to four weekday nights each week during term time.

The school has 45 boys on roll of whom eight are currently using the boarding facility. Ages of the boys attending the school range from 11 to 16 years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure that an overview of a residential pupils day at school and any incidents that have occurred are always communicated to boarding house staff by school staff verbally or in writing at the end of the school day.
- ensure all windows in the boarding house are fitted with curtains or blinds.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. They benefit from highly individualised care given by a nurturing and committed staff team who really care and have high aspirations for them. Residential pupils make good progress in the social, emotional and academic areas of their lives. Their behaviour is improved as a result of boarding at the school and they learn how to manage their emotions. Analysis of GCSE results of pupils who left the school last year evidences that pupils who boarded at the school achieved higher grades than their peers at the school who did not board.

Residential pupils make friends and learn how to resolve disputes and disagreements with others. They also learn to tolerate other people, have empathy and help others. One residential pupil said 'staying here is like being part of a big family, I love it.' Residential pupils learn how to cook, keep their rooms tidy and manage their money. Residential pupils said they feel very safe when staying in the boarding house. Residential pupils enjoy boarding at the school and some residential pupils will ask to stay at the boarding house an extra night rather than going home because it provides a safe place for them and they enjoy boarding so much.

Residential pupils develop trusting and respectful relationship with staff. The atmosphere in the boarding house is relaxed and orderly, with clear routines and expectations that residential pupils adhere to. Parents commented positively about the care given by staff and the progress that their child has made since becoming a boarder at the school.

Residential pupils learn how to manage their behaviour and behave appropriately and as a result of boarding at the school they learn to understand themselves and triggers for their anger. Boarding raises their self esteem and they are able to communicate their feelings because of the trusting relationships they make with staff. One residential pupil said 'I trust and really like the staff, they make me laugh and care about me.'

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

Residential pupils who board at the school benefit and make very good progress as a result of good quality support that is provided by a committed and caring staff team who have high aspirations for them both personally and academically.

Residential pupils enjoy excellent relationships with staff who provide positive role models for them and offer consistency and stability. Routines in the boarding house run smoothly and students understand their responsibilities and expectations of behaviour are clear.

The school has a robust assessment, admission and induction procedure for pupils who wish to board. Staff ensure there is an appropriate mix of boarders and ensure new residential pupils admitted to the boarding house will not have a negative impact on existing residential pupils.

Residential pupils are able to contact their family and friends and make telephone calls in private. Staff are aware of people who it has been deemed by the Local Authority are not suitable to be in contact with residential pupils and are vigilant about who residential pupils are in contact with.

A strength of the school is how residential pupils are fully consulted about all aspects of boarding at the school. Residential pupils views are sought to improve the boarding experience and so they understand that their views are valid and valued by staff. Residential pupils said 'staff always listen to us and take our opinions seriously.' For example, residential pupils are able to request to change rooms and this request will be granted whenever possible. Residential pupils are

encouraged to give their views in daily community meetings and individual key worker sessions. Relationships between staff and residential pupils is trusting and honest. One residential pupil said 'staff are easy to talk to and really care about me, I can tell them anything that is bothering me.'

Staff ensure the wellbeing of residential pupils is at the centre of their practice and this is clearly evidenced in comprehensive care plans that document the diverse and complex needs of the residential pupils and how staff are to meet these care needs. Clear targets are in place and these are reviewed termly to evidence progress of students. Residential pupils understand these targets and work hard to achieve them with the support of staff. One Residential pupil said they were very proud that they had achieved their target of learning to win or lose without getting angry.

Healthcare is well managed in the boarding house. Health care plans detail individual health care needs and what action is needed by staff to meet these needs. The school nurse is available for consultation during school hours and staff have good links with external therapists and health services. Training in topics such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorders and attachment theory has been undertaken to ensure staff have sufficient knowledge to work effectively with residential pupils. Staff are pro-active in obtaining health services if they identify a need. Medication is safely stored and managed and staff are trained in the safe administration of medication. This means residential pupils receive their medication safely and at the right time.

Boarding house accommodation has recently been re-furbished and now offers a comfortable, homely and quality environment for residential pupils. Most bedrooms have en-suite facilities that offer private washing and toilet facilities. Staff and residential pupils have decorated the house with posters and made wall decorations such as wooden cars that they have painted and displayed. Photographs of residential pupils succeeding in various activities and tasks such as making cakes are displayed throughout the house. Brightly coloured and fun educational posters are displayed giving information about the dangers of smoking and the benefits of healthy eating. Residential pupils benefit from being able to use the schools very well equipped gymnasium, sports hall and swimming pool during boarding time. The school has extensive grounds where residential pupils enjoy playing football. Some windows in the house are not yet fitted with curtains or blinds. Residential pupils said they had not noticed the lack of curtains and didn't mind that there was not any. The windows are not overlooked by nearby houses so there is no impact on their privacy or dignity. However, the lack of curtains or blinds detracts from the homely environment.

Residential pupils are able to take part in a variety of activities when they board at the school. Staff run football coaching sessions, trips to the nearby town to shop and visits to local places of interest such as museums. Every term residential pupils vote for a day trip to places such as London or to watch a football match. Residential pupils are able to join local scout groups or army cadet groups. This means their energy is being channelled positively and they are able to make friends outside of school.

Boarding staff work closely with academic staff to ensure residential pupils benefit from a 24 hour curriculum. Staff attend reviews and support residential pupils with homework and reading. Boarding staff communicate comprehensive information to academic staff at the start of the school day about each residential pupil following their stay in the boarding house. However, communication given to boarding staff at the end of each school day is not always comprehensive or documented. This does not impact on the welfare of students as boarding staff are on duty through the school day and are usually aware of any incidents concerning any residential pupils.

Residential pupils said they enjoy the meals provided when they are boarding. Meal times are

sociable, relaxed and orderly occasions where staff and residential pupils eat together. Residential pupils learn table manners, to take turns, clear up after themselves and eat healthily. Residential pupils are able to plan and cook their own meals as part as their plan for independence.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

Safeguarding arrangements in place for residential pupils when they are boarding are outstanding. Staff are very vigilant and well trained. The school is pro-active at implementing safeguarding policies and procedures and ensuring excellence is maintained in this area.

Safeguarding policies and procedures give staff clear guidance and information. Staff are knowledgeable about how best to keep residential pupils safe and what action to take if they have any safeguarding or child protection concerns. The designated safeguarding and child protection officer at the school is trained to an appropriate level in safeguarding and closely works with boarding staff to ensure the safety of residential pupils and follow up any safeguarding concerns. The school has a very good relationship with the local authority safeguarding officer who commented that the school is very vigilant and always reports any concerns or incidents. All residential pupils interviewed said they felt very safe boarding at the school. One residential pupil said 'I trust staff will make sure I am safe. This school is a very safe place.'

Recruitment procedures are robust and ensure only suitable persons are employed at the school. Staff disciplinary policies and procedures relating to whistleblowing are clear and understood by staff.

A strength of the boarding house is the effective implementation of behaviour management policies and procedures. As a result of a nurturing approach by staff, along with firm and fair boundaries and rules that are consistently implemented, residential pupils learn to improve their behaviour and manage their emotions. One parent said 'I have seen a huge and positive change in my child's behaviour since they started boarding at the school. Their attitude has changed and they now are able to hug me, where before they wouldn't come near me.' One residential pupil said 'since I have been coming here I have learned to respect my elders.'

Staff succeed in gaining the trust and respect of residential pupils who have complex and diverse needs by really taking time to understand each individual, listen to them and find out what approach is most effective for them. For example, innovative use is made by staff of 'calm boxes'. These boxes contain items that really help calm residential pupils and are offered to students who are in situations where they are finding it hard to manage their anger.

Residential pupils do not go missing from the boarding house and physical restraints and sanctions imposed are minimal. Staff put an emphasis on praising and encouraging positive behaviour rather than punishing negative behaviour. Residential pupils are able to earn points for good behaviour that they can change into money to spend when they go shopping with staff. Good use has been made of a 'swear chart'. This chart documents each time a residential pupil swears or used sexually explicit language. It has successfully made Residential pupils aware of how much they are swearing and learn to reduce it. Residential pupils earn rewards if their swearing reduces.

Residential pupils comment that bullying is not an issue in the boarding house and if there are any incidents they are confident that staff will deal effectively to stop it. Work is undertaken with residential pupils to educate them about counter bullying. Staff have undertaken education with residential pupils on cyber bullying and how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet.

Health and safety is very well managed in the school. Risk assessments provide clear guidance for staff of how to manage identified risks relating to individual residential pupils, activities undertaken in the school or outside of the school by residential pupils and risks associated with the boarding house. Checks on portable electrical appliances, gas and electric appliances and fire prevention equipment are regularly undertaken. All residential pupils know what action to take to ensure their safety in the event of a fire in the boarding house.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Good

The boarding provision of the school is very well managed and led by a skilled and experienced head of care who is effectively supported by the Head Teacher and Governors and who is well respected by both staff and residential pupils. Boarding has a high profile at the school and makes a major contribution to the social and personal development of pupils who board.

Aims of the boarding house are clearly and comprehensively documented. Staff understand the aims of the boarding provision and how boarding fits in to the 24 hour curriculum at the school. Records, policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and the manager ensures staff are familiar with all boarding house policies and procedures.

Staff working in the boarding house are well trained which ensures they have the skills and knowledge required to effectively work with the residential pupils. Staff benefit from a comprehensive induction package when they start working in the boarding house. Training recently undertaken by staff includes physical restraint, first aid, fire marshal training, safeguarding and administration of medication. Regular supervision of staff is undertaken by the head of care. Supervision sessions identify any concerns or training needs staff have and how these will be met.

The head of care and staff are up to date with recent legislation and developments in practice and the staff team have an innovative and creative approach to caring for the residential pupils. One member of staff said 'the head of care welcomes our ideas and views so things can be improved.' There is always an appropriate number of staff on duty to meet the needs of residential pupils. The head of care undertakes regular shifts in the boarding house. This means he maintains his relationship with residential pupils and is aware of their needs. Equality of opportunity is promoted in the boarding house and staff are aware of any cultural, religious or spiritual needs of individual residential pupils and how these will be met.

Parents comment on the effective communication they have with the boarding staff and how well the boarding staff provide them with information about the progress of their children. Residential pupils know how to complain and said they were confident staff would deal with their complaints and inform them of the outcome.

The head of care undertakes a regular evaluation of the quality of care provided in the boarding house and how this can be improved. There is an awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement of the boarding house and a self evaluation document has been produced. This is informed by monitoring visits from a Governor whose visits highlight areas for improvement and action points are raised. The head of care and staff team work hard to implement improvements and are committed to improving care provided in the boarding house. Six recommendations were made at the previous inspection and these have been fully addressed.

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	123939
Social care unique reference number	SC038758
DfE registration number	933/7006

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 Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	8
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Richard Berry
Date of previous boarding inspection	22/03/2013
Telephone number	01823 275569
Email address	office@skycollege.sch.gov.uk

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