

Starhurst School

Starhurst School, Chart Lane South, DORKING, Surrey, RH5 4DB

Inspection dates	20/05/2014 to 22/05/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Good	2
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- 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 to meet pupils' holistic needs.
- Pupils thrive in an environment where staff recognise and value their individual strengths and unique qualities. They make significant progress in relation to their starting points in managing their emotions and developing coping skills to enhance their future life chances. Pupils show improvement in their social skills, confidence and self-esteem. The residential provision is an integral part of the school and central in advancing pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development. Families recognise the progress pupils make and attribute their children's increase in confidence to their boarding experience.
- Managers and staff are keen to drive forward improvement to provide pupils with the optimum opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Strong, effective leadership and management ensures high standards of care.
- Pupils enjoy their boarding experience and particularly the range of activities on offer. Through the varied activity programme they have enriched social experiences. They are able to pursue individual interests and have opportunities to develop new skills and interests.
- Pupils feel safe and protected. Robust safeguarding practices protect pupils. Staff address all pupils' health and welfare needs. Staff pay close attention to their emotional and psychological well-being. Staff are skilled and competent in addressing the needs of pupils and receive appropriate training and support to promote the progress and development of pupils.

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. Meetings took place with the head of care, head teacher, deputy head teacher, bursar, staff, residential pupils, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) worker, chef, site manager. The inspector joined pupils for three meals. Observations took place in residential units and the inspector joined pupils and staff on an off-site activity to the local park. Social workers were telephoned but were unavailable. The inspector had telephone discussions with two parents. Records and documents were examined.

Inspection team

Janet Hunnam

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Starhurst School is a maintained special school that incorporates day and residential provision for boys between 11 and 16 years of age with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has three residential units, one of which is used for senior residential pupils to experience independent living and to acquire independent living skills. The school is situated on the outskirts of Dorking, Surrey and is able to take a maximum of 20 children on a residential basis. The last social care inspection of the school was in May 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- develop pupil's individual care plans to include specific targets to promote their progress and development
- develop pupils' individual care plans to include the full range of health issues to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Outcomes for residential pupils are good. Residential pupils thrive in a nurturing and supportive environment. They experience good quality relationships with staff and enjoy being in their company. Staff respond to them with warmth and good humour. Consequently, pupils listen to staff and accept the support they offer, enabling them to make significant progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils report that they can approach residential staff knowing staff will listen and importantly, that staff will respond to them. This develops their confidence and self-esteem knowing they are valued and respected. Pupils are developing constructive, tolerant peer relationships with an understanding of appropriate social skills. Parents acknowledge their child's progress, reporting that they are 'doing really well'. A parent stated that they are 'so pleased with his progress' seeing improvements in behaviour and family relationships.

Pupils report positively on their residential experience. They enjoy a wide range of enriching activities enabling them to participate in new leisure pursuits and follow their personal interests. They engage in activities in the community, which develops their self-confidence and social engagement. They are able to make choices on a daily basis in relation to their activities, ensuring staff consider their individual preferences and building their own sense of identity.

Pupils benefit from having their physical and emotional health promoted to a high standard. They have their medical needs met and are encouraged to pursue healthy lifestyles and make appropriate choices. Clear routines and structure with safe, consistent boundaries result in improved sleeping and eating patterns which improves the overall health of pupils. Pupils benefit from the high priority given to their emotional well-being. Support from staff in dealing with their emotions result in improvements to their behaviour and in their ability to focus in school leading to good educational outcomes at GCSE level. The development of pupils' coping skills has a positive impact on their future life chances.

There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for their next stage and the transition from school. A separate area of the residential provision enables pupils approaching this transition to experience the realities of taking responsibility for themselves and developing their independence skills. Structured programmes develop their skills and provide opportunities to build their confidence so that they are prepared for moving on to the next stage of their life. Parents report that their child's self-confidence has significantly increased during the time spent in the separate, independent accommodation.

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

The quality of the residential provision is good. Excellent support by an experienced, stable and committed staff team provides nurturing, sensitive and highly individualised care. This enables pupils to make significant progress in many aspects of their lives. Parents report that boarding has had a positive impact on their child's progress. Pupils have opportunities to experience the extended day and participate in activities as part of their induction to the residential provision, before choosing to stay the night and accessing the 24 hour curriculum. This ensures that pupils have established relationships with staff, are happy accessing the service and are keen to participate and benefit from all it offers. Staff tailor induction for new pupils to their needs, with an emphasis on each pupil feeling comfortable and happy in the residential environment.

Staff know the pupils very well enabling them to provide support to meet pupils' individual needs. The head of care has recently revised the care planning process. Care plans focus on pupil's individual needs identified in their statement of special educational needs with specified targets for their development. However, these targets are not set within a context of what specific

strategies are in place for the pupil in order for them to achieve the target or within a time frame. The plans identify some relevant health issues but do not include the full range of health matters affecting pupils' development and progress. Staff report each week to pupils' families on their progress. Parents appreciate this regular contact in keeping them informed of positive developments and any issues of concern.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the activities available and engage in a wide range of leisure pursuits both on site and in the wider community. Staff are responsive to pupils' preferences and activity plans are flexible in relation to what pupils would like to do during the evening. Activities include bowling, swimming, local parks and organised trips such as the London Eye and the coast. On-site activities include a dvd club and diversity evenings where pupils experience the food and entertainment of different countries. A particularly popular activity is craft where pupils are able to develop their creative and sewing skills. This range of activities allows pupils to pursue their individual interests and experience new leisure pursuits thus enriching their social experiences and developing their self-confidence.

Arrangements to meet health needs ensure 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 pupils, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to provide specialist care when needed. The emotional health of pupils has a high priority. A child and adolescent mental health service professional attends the school for two days a week providing specialist support for staff in relation to understanding pupils' behaviour. She also work directly with pupils and support staff to implement consistent strategies for pupils. Consequently, pupils benefit from this on-site resource through prompt support for their emotional and psychological well-being.

Pupils enjoy the food on offer, which is healthy and varied. The school chef caters for special dietary needs. Meal times are well-ordered, sociable occasions. Pupils respond appropriately to eating in small groups with staff. They develop their social skills and healthy eating routines. Staff encourage pupils to lead active, healthy lifestyles joining them in physical activities to model appropriate behaviour.

Pupils live in spacious, well-maintained and comfortable accommodation. They are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their own personalities and interests, which develops their self-identity and their sense of belonging within the residential environment. Staff support pupils to maintain regular contact with their families.

Residential pupils' safety

Good

There are good arrangements in place to ensure residential pupils receive safe care and to protect them from harm. Pupils report they feel safe and 'protected by staff'. Parents confirm they have no concerns regarding pupils' safety.

Safeguarding pupils is a priority. A rigorous recruitment process is in place to check that adults are suitable to work with children. The school has not recently employed new residential staff and so the robustness of the process has not been tested at this inspection. Clear policies and procedures reflect the vulnerabilities of pupils and these, together with up-to-date training, fully support staff to provide effective safeguarding measures. All staff participates in appropriate child protection training. The head of care is the designated child protection officer. Staff are confident in their safeguarding role and alert in recognising causes for concern and taking proper action to protect pupils. The head of care makes referrals to the appropriate authorities when necessary.

Promoting positive behaviour is a strength of the school. Expectations of appropriate behaviour are clear, based on mutual trust, respect and concern for others. Pupils report that bullying is not

a problem and staff take any incidents of bullying very seriously. A parent reported that if they have concerns about bullying, staff promptly deal with the issue and closely monitor pupils to prevent it happening. The school has its own anti-bullying helplines so that pupils can text or e-mail their concerns. Currently staff are promoting this support by means of posters around the school and the residential accommodation, information in the 'Welcome to Boarding' booklet and informing parents again of the facility. This focuses on anti-bullying and ways of letting staff know if pupils are experiencing bullying. Staff monitor the safety of pupils and implement protective strategies.

Positive, meaningful relationships between staff and pupils underpin behaviour management strategies within the residential environment. Staff understand each pupil's specific vulnerabilities and provide support for pupils who are experiencing difficulties without resort to physical intervention. There have been no incidents resulting in physical intervention since the last inspection. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management and in safely restraining a pupil if necessary. Sanctions are rarely used as part of the behaviour management strategy. Where formal consequences are required, they are proportionate and related to the misconduct.

Pupils are keen to board at the school and understand the standard of behaviour expected of them. They enjoy the residential experience and rarely leave the residential provision without permission. There have been no such incidents since the last inspection. Appropriate policies, procedures and protocols with the local police are in place to protect pupils if they leave the site without permission.

The school monitors the safety of the residential provision effectively. Staff carry out a range of health and safety checks and fire safety checks regularly, including fire drills for residential pupils. The fire safety system is currently being up-dated to strengthen the measures in place to protect pupils and staff.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the provision are outstanding. The experienced and committed head of care effectively leads the staff team in providing warm, nurturing care and positive experiences for pupils. The residential provision is integral to the school. Senior managers recognise its value in advancing pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development.

Well-trained and skilful staff promote and enhance the care and welfare of pupils. Pupils benefit from clear, well-known structures, routines and boundaries, which contribute to them feeling safe. Staff know the pupils and their families very well enabling them to provide highly individualised care, support and guidance. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet pupil's needs with school staff providing additional support for activities when required. The stable staff team receive regular training updates ensuring they have the skills to support pupils effectively. Staff receive regular supervision to review and challenge their practice to promote high standards of care. Communication and information sharing amongst staff is excellent, resulting in prompt interventions to support pupils and promoting consistency in the care provided.

The head of care places a high priority on monitoring the residential provision, ensuring the service continues to provide opportunities for pupils to develop and make progress. Formal reviews of the residential provision take place each term. An external, independent person visits every half term providing high quality, thorough and comprehensive reports, which the head of care uses as quality assurance tools to identify areas for development and maintain high standards. The head of care takes prompt action to remedy any shortfalls. Requirements made at the last inspection were quickly remedied. Processes for recording medication are robust and new systems for care planning are in place. Safeguarding and child protection records are detailed and

demonstrate appropriate safeguarding procedures.

Parents report that communication with staff is very good. The pupil's link worker calls their family each week to report on their progress and updates them promptly on any significant incident. Complaints are infrequent. Managers deal appropriately with any concerns raised through the complaints procedure.. Pupils are aware of how they can make a complaint and use the system effectively to make their views known formally and make requests related to their individual care. Pupils report that the head of care 'always responds within 48 hours if we have a complaint'. They appreciate this response. This respect for their concerns or request makes them feel valued and develops their self-esteem.

Pupils' opinions are highly valued. Questionnaires for residential pupils provide the head of care with important feedback on their views on issues such as feeling safe, activities, support they are receiving and bullying. Managers and the staff team take their responses very seriously and act upon them. For example, the response to the questionnaire indicated that few pupils knew of the confidential helplines to report bullying. Consequently, staff are promoting this facility within the school to ensure more pupils are aware of different ways of reporting any bullying concerns. Staff have formally asked pupils, through a questionnaire, to suggest activities they would like to do. Their replies have informed future planning for spring and summer activities.

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	125464
Social care unique reference number	SC013883
DfE registration number	936/7027

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	
Number of boarders on roll	20
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr J Watson
Date of previous boarding inspection	14/05/2013
Telephone number	01306 883763
Email address	admin@starhurst.surrey.sch.uk

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