

Sunnydown School

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

Inspection dates	14/01/2015 to 16/01/2015	
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

- Boarders thrive and make excellent progress in relation to their starting points within a nurturing environment which values their strengths and unique qualities. Boarders make significant development in their social skills, independence skills, confidence and self-esteem. The residential provision is central in advancing boarders' academic, personal, social and emotional development.
- Boarders benefit from strong, dynamic leadership and management and a dedicated and committed staff team. Staff work cohesively and in close collaboration with families to meet boarders' individual needs and promote positive outcomes. The residential provision is continually evolving and responding to boarders' views and those of their families.
- There are excellent practices for safeguarding and promoting the best interests of boarders. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, know each boarder extremely well and protect them in relation to their specific vulnerabilities whilst ensuring they have opportunities to develop appropriate life skills. Boarders report they feel safe and parents have no concerns about their safety within the residential provision.
- Strong, respectful and nurturing relationships between boarders and staff allow boarders to develop trust in the adults who care for them enabling them to work together and focus on specific areas of difficulty to promote development.
- Boarders are extremely positive about their residential experience. They delight in their experience, enjoy their time in boarding and report enthusiastically on the support they receive from staff. Parents are also highly complimentary, acknowledging the impact the experience is having on their sons' progress and development and on relationships within their families.

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 were held with the head, head of care, care staff, boarders, student council, catering team, business manager, chair of the governors, behaviour management lead, assistant head and parents, Activities were observed, residential accommodation visited and the inspector joined boarders for two meals. Information was gathered from Parent View and surveys conducted by the school. Policies, procedures and boarders' records were examined.

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 40 are boarders who reside up to four nights a week. 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 October 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Include safeguarding as an area for discussion in all staff supervision sessions.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. Boarders thrive within a nurturing, supportive, stable environment where they develop confidence, self-esteem and make immense progress in relation to their starting points. Parents report extremely positively on the impact of the residential provision. One parent commented that for their son boarding 'has been life changing' in developing his confidence and social interaction. Other parents remarked that their son 'now exudes happiness' having been very unhappy at a previous school and they 'can't rate it highly enough and it ticks all the boxes'. Boarders are extremely positive and enthusiastic describing their experience as 'fantastic' and 'exciting'.

Boarders enjoy excellent relationships with staff and enjoy being in their company. Staff respond to them with warmth and good humour. Consequently, boarders trust staff and accept the support staff offer enabling them to make significant progress. A parent remarked that boarders 'are being understood' thus building their self-confidence and self-esteem knowing they are valued as unique individuals. Boarders are developing constructive, tolerant peer relationships with an understanding of appropriate social skills. A boarder commented that boarding 'helps us co-operate with other people'. Parents acknowledge this progress commenting that now their son has friends whereas previously they were socially isolated.

Boarders enjoy a wide range of enriching experiences both on-site and in the local community. Some boarders pursue individual interests such as Scouts, Army Cadets, cricket and rugby in the community whilst there are numerous on-site activities to suit boarders' individual preferences. Group activities such as visiting the theatre, bowling and eating out provide opportunities for boarders to extend their social experiences. Residential activities, such as a skiing trip, add further to their personal development. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme allows boarders to develop leadership and inter-personal skills. Boarders report that staff 'keep us active', that they enjoy the activities, which are 'great'.

Boarders succeed within a setting where they are valued as individuals and where adults appreciate their views. They each have a key worker who consults with them on an individual basis but boarders report that they can approach any member of staff. Boarders clearly appreciate the informal interaction with staff, which bolsters their sense of appreciation. Regular boarder forum meetings allow boarders to put forward their views on day-to-day matters and make suggestions such as activities and choice of meals. Surveys of the views of boarders and their families add to consultation processes with evidence of managers responding to these expressed views, such as changing the care planning process as a result of boarders' comments. These consultation processes demonstrate to boarders that their views are important and matter to staff, building their self-esteem.

Boarders are purposefully prepared for adulthood through the 'Fit 4 Life' programme. All boarders have targets related to this area as part of the 24-hour curriculum, focussing on developing their independence and life skills. Boarders report that key workers support them effectively in developing these skills. In addition, staff provide support so that boarders develop emotionally to cope with the realities of the adult world.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care for boarders is outstanding. Excellent support by an experienced and committed staff team, provides nurturing, sensitive and highly individualised care. The residential experience offers boarders consistency and clear boundaries allowing them to feel emotionally secure and thus more able to access and engage with their education and

learning.

Staff ensure induction for new boarders is tailored to their needs with a gradual, well-planned assessment and introduction, so that boarders feel comfortable and happy in the residential environment. Education and care staff work closely together and communicate effectively ensuring boarders receive continuity and a consistent approach.

The head of care leads a staff team who are dedicated to promoting positive outcomes for boarders. Following consultation with boarders regarding their care planning and review, a new system is in place for setting individual targets and reviewing progress. Close liaison with education staff allow care staff to provide support for boarders to work towards targets within their individual education plans. A parent commented that there is 'seamless working between school and boarding'. Boarders also have 'Just for Me' targets and targets relating to daily living skills. Action plans are specific and continue through weekends, with families fully involved in supporting boarders to achieve their goals. Keyworkers review progress with boarders each week and evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of targets every three weeks. Boarders are fully aware of their targets and their progress is linked to an incentive scheme, which they engage in enthusiastically. This continuous process of reviewing targets and progress enables staff to identify areas where boarders require more support whilst highlighting their achievements and providing further opportunities for personal development. A parent commented that staff treat boarders 'as individuals, they understand them and know their personalities' thus enabling them to understand their needs and provide specific support to help them advance and grow. A strength of the residential provision is how committed the staff team are in getting to know the boarder and their family and working with them individually to meet their specific needs.

Arrangements to meet health needs ensure boarders receive appropriate support. Staff receive training to administer medication safely and training to address boarders' specific medical needs. The system for the administration of medication is robust and is effectively monitored by managers. Boarders' psychological needs are sensitively monitored and staff are highly effective in supporting boarders' emotional well-being. Appropriate referrals are made to specialist services to support boarders' well-being when necessary.

Boarders benefit from a broad approach to promoting a healthy lifestyle. The school is currently working towards re-accreditation of National Healthy Schools Status. Boarders all have 'Fit 4 Life' targets specific to their needs, which encourages them to develop healthy routines and daily living skills. The catering team are fully involved in promoting healthy eating for boarders and meeting any specific dietary needs. Boarders enjoy the food on offer, which is healthy and varied. Meals are well-ordered, sociable occasions with boarders enjoying each other's company and interacting appropriately with staff.

Boarders reside in comfortable accommodation, some of which is currently being refurbished to provide new bedroom furniture. Boarders are involved in choosing colours for redecorating communal spaces. They are able to personalise their individual bed spaces, giving them a sense of belonging and self-identity.

Boarders report they can contact their families easily, allowing them to settle into boarding routines. Parents confirm that communication with staff is excellent. They receive weekly emails from staff updating them on the week's events and boarders' progress.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements in place to ensure boarders receive safe care and are protected from harm are outstanding. Boarders report they feel safe because it's 'like a family' and 'staff are helpful and look after us'. Parents confirm that they have no concerns regarding boarders' safety. Boarders

are very caring, tolerant and respectful towards each other and confidently approach staff who respond to them sensitively. Boarders do not see bullying as a problem and one boarder stated that if there is any bullying 'it is dealt with straight away'. Another commented 'if I have any problems I can go to any member of staff who will help'.

The safety of boarders is paramount. Recruitment processes ensure only adults who have been checked as being suitable to work with children are employed. Clear policies and procedures reflect the vulnerabilities of boarders and these, together with up-to-date training, fully support staff to implement effective safeguarding practices. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and know the procedure for reporting any concerns. The head of care is the designated child protection officer assisted by two deputies, including the head teacher. Weekly meetings of this team allow full consideration of all matters affecting boarders' well-being and close monitoring of all concerns reported by staff. Effective consultation and liaison with local safeguarding agencies when necessary protects boarders by ensuring appropriate action is taken. Staff are confident in their safeguarding role and alert in recognising causes for concern and taking proper action to protect boarders from harm.

There have been no incidents of boarders leaving the residential provision without permission. Close levels of supervision ensure staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times. However, policies and procedures are in place to protect them if a boarder leaves the site without permission. Since the last inspection, liaison with local police has taken place ensuring these policies and procedures are in line with local police protocols.

Trusting relationships between staff and boarders are the foundation of promoting positive behaviour, allowing boarders to accept the support staff offer. Expectations of appropriate behaviour are clear and consistent providing boarders with a supportive and safe environment. Consequently, the standard of behaviour is excellent. Boarders have positive relationships with each other and enjoy being with their friends. Older boarders are role models, earning respect and admiration from younger boarders and staff for demonstrating tolerance, responsibility and appropriate social skills. Staff are highly skilled in diffusing potentially difficult situations and receive training in behaviour management. Consequently, no incidents involving physical intervention have been recorded for eight years and staff do not use sanctions to manage behaviour. The culture within the residential provision promotes recognising and rewarding achievement with boarders engaging enthusiastically in accumulating stars for positive achievement.

Safety of the residential environment is monitored effectively. A range of health and safety checks and fire checks are carried out regularly, including fire drills for boarders. Such comprehensive systems protect boarders and staff. Risk assessments are thorough and highlight a positive approach to risk, protecting boarders without limiting their participation in enriching activities and leisure pursuits.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. The new head teacher, head of care and senior leaders all share a common understanding of the ethos of the school where the boarding community is seen as a central and important aspect. The head of care is forward thinking, innovative and continuously evaluating the residential provision to improve opportunities for staff to promote boarders' positive outcomes, which is fundamental to the ethos of the service. The changes to the care planning process demonstrate how staff are keen to respond to boarders' feedback and implement change to provide more effective target setting and review of progress. Currently, the head of care is implementing a new system of 'activity recipe cards' which link specific developmental targets to activities, thus offering boarders new activities that will provide opportunities for personal development.

In addition to new initiatives, the head of care regularly monitors the residential provision, ensuring the service continues to provide high standards of care. Monitoring reports by an external visitor every half term provide a valuable contribution to oversight of the service to maintain high standards. Evaluation of the boarding provision has also been undertaken by two external consultants. There are consistently high expectations to provide an exceptional residential experience to benefit boarders and enhance their future lives. The residential provision is a priority area within the school's development plan ensuring the service is constantly moving forward to meet the needs of boarders effectively. Managers have addressed areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, again demonstrating a commitment to high standards.

No formal complaints have been made in relation to the residential provision since the last inspection. Parents report excellent communication and support from boarding staff. One parent commented that 'staff are amazing; they challenge the young people and parents'. These constructive working relationships between staff and families promote greater understanding of boarders' needs and an ethos of working together to benefit boarders.

Boarders receive care from a stable, resourceful, extremely competent staff team who 'go the extra mile' to support boarders. This small staff team is working at maximum capacity to provide such high quality care and meet the often-complex needs of boarders. The team is bolstered by school staff who support boarders during evening activities and managers are aware of the need to keep staffing levels under review to maintain high standards. Staff work cohesively within boarding and across the school to achieve consistency and continuity of care. Staff are fully supported in their role. This includes high quality training and e-learning opportunities. The systems for individual staff support and appraisal have been improved, focusing on encouraging staff to take more responsibility and ownership of the processes and using these processes as valuable tools for development and implementing best practice. The system for supervision could be enhanced by including safeguarding as an area for discussion in every session.

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	
Number of boarders on roll	40
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 16
Headteacher	Mr P Jensen
Date of previous boarding inspection	01/10/2013
Telephone number	01883 342281

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