

# Southfield School

Southfields Special School, Gipsy Lane, WOKINGHAM, Berkshire, RG40 2HR

<b>Inspection dates</b>	09/02/2015 to 11/02/2015	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- A key strength of this school is the quality of relationships that are formed between adults and residential pupils across the whole school environment. Staff are excellent role models and residential pupils trust them. They learn how to relate to others and behave appropriately.
- There are excellent outcomes. Residential pupils learn how to manage their difficult and challenging emotions through the well-focussed support of all staff, and the ready availability of psychotherapy and counselling services.
- Education and care staff are one extremely close and collaborative team, which provides a consistent approach. School attendance is excellent in relation to starting points and residential pupils are in a good emotional state so they are able to learn.
- There is excellent leadership and management which is appreciated by staff. The headteacher has managed the residential side to an exceptional level in the short absence of a head of care. There is robust challenge, oversight and support from a governing body, who share a wealth of qualifications and experience.
- Residential pupils are safe and say they feel safe and secure. Issues and concerns are dealt with swiftly in consultation with other professionals.
- Transitions are extremely well managed. There is excellent support from staff and investment in the residential pupils to secure their future choices, for example accessing a college course. All residential pupils who leave the school are in education, employment or training.

### 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 four hours notice of this welfare only inspection. The inspector undertook a tour of the residential provision and spoke with the residential pupils and staff. He took lunch and dinner with the pupils over two days and spent two evenings observing activities. Records and policies were scrutinised. He also undertook interviews with key staff including the headteacher, premises manager, cook, a school governor, human resources administrator and a counsellor. The inspector met with a social worker face to face; parents and the school nurse were spoken to over the telephone. Contact was made with the local authority designated officer and relevant information was shared. In agreement with the headteacher written surveys were completed by residential pupils and staff. These were analysed during the inspection and the views taken into account. Parent-view (on-line feedback) was also utilised.

## Inspection team

Keith Riley

Lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Southfield School is a secondary co-educational maintained school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, who have experienced social, behavioural and emotional difficulties. It accommodates up to 60 pupils at any one time, 16 of whom stay in the residential provision. Currently, eight boys are on roll. The residential accommodation is provided within an area of the main school site. Southfield School is situated in a residential area, near to Wokingham town centre. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2013. A primary school, which is on the same site, can take up to 10 pupils.

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

- Review the systems in place to ensure all written records are clear and up to date
- Ensure all necessary training and equipment is in place for protection against fire.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils are exceptional. Residential pupils benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment where they develop skills, independence and confidence. The boarding experience enables them to develop self-esteem and pride to a significant level. They develop constructive relationships with their peers. There is no bullying in the boarding provision. A residential pupil said, 'Its pretty all right here'.

Residential pupils, who historically have experienced chaotic environments, thrive with structure, routine and boundaries in their lives. Their emotional resilience and well-being significantly improves. They are better able to regulate their own emotions. This means that behaviours that challenge diminish, and school attendance significantly improves to an excellent level. The boarding provision is a calm, relaxed environment with an extremely positive culture. A social worker said, 'The school has done a brilliant job, (name of child) is eating well and engaging with others in ways he has not done before'. Residential pupils develop an emotional empathy for others as a result of their boarding experience.

Residential pupils look up to the staff and enjoy positive and constructive relationships with them. Staff are excellent role models to the residential pupils they are supporting. Pupils live in a safe environment where they are fully supported to make the right choices when feeling frustrated, anxious or angry. A member of staff said, 'Staff and pupils get on very well, they are our number one priority'.

Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of their own health needs. For example, they are aware of the need for good personal hygiene and healthy eating. They learn about growing up and various health needs. Pupils are encouraged to do regular exercise and particularly enjoy healthy activities, such as football or going to the gym. Staff liaise with relevant health agencies, professionals and parents to ensure comprehensive health care plans are in place. Outcomes are excellent, for example some pupil's now access necessary health support they receive before joining the school.

Building up social skills and team work is fully embraced by residential pupils in the range of activities that are available to them. They are stimulating and purposeful. Pupils develop social skills and learn how to relate to others. A professional reported that a pupil is smiling and engaging in conversation in a way that has not been seen before. A parent said, 'He would not have played in a team before but now he does. That is down to the way staff work with him'. A residential pupil now coaches football to younger students in the primary school. There is excellent community integration, for example some residential pupils took part in a cycle ride which raised money for charity.

Residential pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. They learn how to take care of themselves and take a pride in their personal appearance. They demonstrate maturity and responsibility and are able to go on unaccompanied trips to the local town or to visit family members, sometimes using public transport. Residential pupils engage with the unique arrangements to prepare them for a college placement by attending bespoke courses two years in advance. Pupils who may struggle with change, including those on the autistic spectrum, are successful in gaining places on the courses they identify they would like to do.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Staff have high aspirations and work closely together to help pupils deal with the complexities of everyday life and maximise their

future chances. Highly effective and cohesive working between residential and education staff provides a continuity of care and consistent boundaries. Pupils feel secure within this structure. Education staff work with pupils in their living environment and care staff support residential pupils at school or college. Pupils benefit from these close working partnerships by the professionals in their lives, educationally and socially. Residential pupils learn how to become responsible members of society. British values are strongly promoted.

Detailed placement plans guide staff in how to meet the individual needs of the pupils in their care. They include individual risk assessments, health care plans and behaviour management plans. Staff ensure they are under regular review and updated where necessary. However, in one case, a psychological report was not signed or dated. There is no negative impact on the residential pupils. Regular reports are written to ensure progress is being made against the clear and realistic goals.

Residential pupils receive excellent pastoral support from sensitive and caring boarding staff. Staff at all levels work in a coordinated way to provide excellent care and support for the residential pupils, enabling them to develop individually at their own pace. Other professionals, such as a psychotherapist and counsellor, are readily available to the pupils. Residential pupils regularly take advantage to speak to experienced and qualified professionals who understand their needs. They can turn to people they trust and know their concerns will be taken seriously. As a result pupils make excellent progress with their emotional well-being and self-awareness. They come to an understanding of their life story and make sense of their world. A visiting professional said the school has the best arrangements she has seen to allow pupils access to therapy on their terms and at their pace. This means there is exceptional attendance at sessions such as counselling.

Residential pupils participate in a wide range of activities they have a voice in choosing and thoroughly enjoy. Some examples are ice-skating, swimming, cycling and the cinema. Through these activities pupils develop an understanding how to integrate into the local community, which increases their self-esteem and confidence.

The systems in place for medication ensure that residential pupils receive the right dose at the right time. The previous recommendation to improve the recording of controlled drugs has been fully met. The school nurse is readily available to give health advice, for example about smoking or oral hygiene. She ensures that all routine immunisations are up to date. The school nurse visits the school regularly. Residential pupils have the opportunity to talk about any health issues that are concerning them.

The catering arrangements in the school are excellent. There is a varied menu with any specific dietary needs catered for. The catering department is proud of the achievement in gaining a five star award for food hygiene. Meal times are a well-ordered social occasion. Pupils enjoy each other's company in a relaxed environment.

Residential pupils live in very well-maintained facilities. Communal areas are decorated and furnished to a high standard. All accommodation is homely and comfortable. Residential pupils' bedrooms are well equipped and personalised. Toilet and bathing facilities are of an excellent standard and afford suitable privacy. Pupils say they enjoy staying in the residential units.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

**Good**

There is an excellent approach to safeguarding. All staff are aware of what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern. Residential pupils live in a culture where their physical and emotional safety is paramount. All residential pupils stated they feel very safe at the school. A safeguarding committee, consisting of senior leaders and governors, keep an oversight of all safeguarding

issues.

Child protection procedures are robust and followed diligently by staff. The designated child protection liaison officer ensures the correct notifications are made swiftly, including involvement of the local authority designated officer when necessary. Other professionals speak highly of the school's approach to safeguarding and their transparency. The vast majority of events are well documented. However, in one case the verbal feedback given to a pupil about a concern they had raised could not be evidenced in writing. In another case the decision of a conference was not chased up.

Residential pupils have trusting relationships with staff and each other. They say there is no bullying in the residential setting but, on occasion, it does happen in education time. Pupils acknowledged that if bullying does occur staff are very quick to act. There is an excellent anti-bullying programme that has been put into place. Staff work with pupils and families to ensure all are supported and prevent recurrence. Pupils develop an emotional empathy and understand how their behaviour impacts on others.

There is a superb approach to e-safety. The school has got an excellent balance of safeguarding pupils without restricting them, for example by allowing pupils to use electronic devices. Software, education and monitoring are used to effectively safeguard pupils in the cyber world. Trusting relationships are a key to the success of the school in e-safety. Pupils understand the sanctions that are applied if, for example, they breach a phone contract they have signed.

Staff are well versed and trained in behaviour management to an advanced level. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort. Staff recognise that challenging behaviour is often beyond the pupil's conscious control. Consideration is given to the underlying psychological reasons for such behaviour which is addressed through the range of therapy on offer. Records of intervention are very detailed with considerable oversight by the senior management team. The meticulous approach means that the number of physical interventions is diminishing.

There is a comprehensive procedure in place in the event a residential pupil goes missing. This includes agreed protocols with the local police and other agencies. Individual risk assessments are in place with a clear distinction between unauthorised absence and missing. This avoids unnecessary anxiety and police involvement.

Health and safety has top priority. Pupils are protected by the control measures identified in the individual risk assessments. External contractors certify the safety of key equipment, such as gas boilers and fire protection. There are excellent arrangements for evacuation in the event of an emergency. Fire precautions and protection are robust with a fire risk assessment in place. The fire and rescue service confirmed the school complies with the relevant legislation. However, one door on a new office has not had an automatic closer fitted yet. One staff member, in a high risk fire area, has not completed fire extinguisher training. The shortfalls had already been identified with clear plans to address them.

Recruitment procedures are effectively implemented, for example there are excellent systems in place to check for any gaps in employment and seek explanation from job applicants. The thorough and robust recruitment procedure ensures that only adults, who have been checked as being appropriate to work with children, are employed.

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

Leadership and management of the school are of an outstanding calibre. It is a key strength and influence on driving and expecting high standards from staff and pupils. The headteacher has done an outstanding job in overseeing the boarding during a period without a head of care. He

sees the boarding community as a central and important aspect of the school.

The school has a dedicated board of governors. They are well qualified and experienced. Governors undertake unannounced independent monitoring visits and produce a report about their findings. This contributes to the on-going development of the school. Residential pupils know who the governors are and are confident in talking to them.

There is outstanding support for the staff team. As well as day-to-day guidance and formal supervision, a counsellor to be available especially for staff, on a weekly basis. Staff are able to talk through their own emotions when working with pupils who may resist adults and be oppositional to the support being offered. This bodes for a strong and motivated team. A member of staff said, 'We are a strong team'. A parent said, 'The staff really care, its not just a job to them'. An independent visitor stated, 'Staff are finding the energy, resourcefulness and enthusiasm for continuing to make the residential unit successful'.

Morale is very high. New staff, including education professionals, are fully inducted into the residential provision. They hold the necessary qualifications and experience to meet the needs of the pupils in their care. The supervision and support is outstanding. Pupils benefit from a well trained staff team who are highly motivated to meet their individual needs and are very well supported in their roles.

The senior management team have an accurate evaluation of their own performance. They ensure there are clear goals and aspirations for the future. These are realistic, such as developing the grounds and moving the laundry area to make it more accessible to pupils. The leadership and management team, together with the governors, recognise the future challenges with clear plans to continue to develop and respond to the range of complex needs that pupils present. An example is the staff have had training to upskill them to meet the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum.

All records are kept safely and securely. Key policies are under regular review. Placement plans and other associated documents are detailed and up to date. Senior leaders keep a close oversight on key documents, such as records of restraint. They ensure that interventions are proportionate and appropriate. They analyse trends and ensure there is feedback into practice.

The school establishes and maintains positive and effective contact with parents, carers and placing authorities. Staff are effective communicators, especially when discussing difficult issues. Staff make home visits to further their understanding of the pupil's individual needs. There is excellent partnership working, such as providing a neutral venue for contact to make the experience as positive as possible for all. A placing social worker spoke very highly of how the school keeps the lines of communication open.

The views of residential pupils are central to practice. Staff are attentive and responsive to their needs. Pupils learn what it is to have a secure base in their lives. The consistent and sensitive approach means that pupils feel an emotional warmth and are able to form attachments. Key staff ensure they have weekly sessions with pupils where any pertinent issues are discussed. The views of pupils are also sought more formally, for example by attending a statutory reviews. There is a complaints system in place that pupils know how to access if they want to raise anything they are worried about. Pupils have easy access to an advocate, counsellor or independent visitor to talk about anything that is concerning them. This is a school where the voice of residential pupils is heard very clearly.

This is a good school with many outstanding elements that is extremely well led and managed. The previous points of improvement are fully met; there is a better system in place to manage controlled drugs and there is a comprehensive induction and training programme in boarding.



## 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>	110191
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC011332
<b>DfE registration number</b>	872/7033

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>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	8
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Dominic Geraghty
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	05/11/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 9771293
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