

Meadows School

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

Inspection dates	05/02/2015 to 09/02/2015
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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

- Pupils thrive and make excellent progress in relation to their starting points within a nurturing environment where staff value their strengths and unique qualities. Pupils make significant development in their social skills, independence skills, managing their emotions and building their confidence and self-esteem. The residential provision is central in advancing pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development.
- Pupils benefit from strong dynamic leadership and management and a dedicated and committed staff team. Staff work cohesively and in close collaboration with external specialists and pupils' families to meet pupils' needs and promote positive outcomes.
- There are excellent practices for safeguarding and promoting the best interests of pupils. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, know each pupil extremely well and protect them in relation to their specific vulnerabilities whilst ensuring they have opportunities to develop appropriate life skills. Pupils report that they feel safe within the residential provision.
- Safeguarding training for staff is a key strength. Staff undertake a wide range of training in all aspects of protecting pupils including radicalisation, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, e-safety and gun and knife crime. This extensive training ensures they are fully aware of the risks pupils may encounter and are confident and competent in addressing related concerns.
- All staff pay close attention to the emotional and psychological needs of pupils. Pupils have access to a range of therapeutic resources within the school to promote their emotional well-being.
- Strong, respectful relationships between pupils and staff allow pupils to develop trust in the adults who care for them and consequently benefit from the support and guidance provided by staff.

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 headteacher, head of care, care staff, clinical psychologist, school counsellor, cognitive behaviour therapist, bursar, chair of governors, safeguarding governor, IT lead and student council. Both units were visited, pupils spoken to and activities observed. The inspector joined pupils for two meals. Pupils records and other relevant 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 9 pupils who reside at the school during the week, 5 boys and 4 girls. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses. The boys' house is located within the school grounds and the girls reside in a house within walking distance of the school. The school is situated in Southborough, Kent, close to Tunbridge Wells and caters for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that records of sanctions include the views of pupils.
- Ensure that all targets for pupils outlined in their care plans are specific and measurable.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Pupils speak positively about their residential experience. Staff provide nurturing support enabling pupils to develop tolerance and respect towards others and an understanding of appropriate social skills. Excellent relationships with staff allow pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem. They accept the individual support offered by staff and make significant progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils make considerable strides in their personal development including managing their emotions and behaviour.

Staff clearly place the needs of the pupils and their welfare at the centre of their practice. They ensure pupils receive consistent routines and boundaries alongside sensitive care that acknowledges the unique characteristics of each of the pupils. Pupils recognise that staff value their opinions and views. Each pupil has a key worker who consults individually with pupils. Pupils are confident in approaching any member of the care staff team who, in turn, know all the pupils extremely well and respond to them appropriately. Pupils also have the Pupil Council as a more formal forum for expressing their views and influencing day-to-day matters, for example, accessing their mobile phones in the same way as day pupils do. Pupils also have opportunities to communicate with senior managers, the external, independent visitor and a school governor to share their views and any concerns they may have.

Pupils enjoy their residential experience. They participate in a wide range of activities, both on-site and in the local community, suited to their individual interests and preferences. Pupils attend a local youth club, enabling them to interact with other teenagers and extend their social skills. Other community activities include swimming, the gym, cinema and shopping. Pupils choose their evening activities enabling them to develop their own sense of identity.

Staff support pupils from an early stage to develop life skills and independence skills in preparation for adulthood and the transition from school to the next stage. Pupils have individual targets focusing on developing these skills, building their confidence and enabling them to take more personal responsibility. Some older pupils are successfully accessing community resources independently demonstrating their progress.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Pupils benefit from highly individualised, sensitive and nurturing care provided by an experienced and committed staff team. Induction for new pupils is well planned, taking into consideration the specific needs of the pupil and the requirements of the larger group, ensuring pupils achieve a successful and confident introduction to new routines. Staff visit pupils at home to ensure they comprehensively identify all their needs and then ensure appropriate support is in place to allow pupils to develop and achieve positive outcomes. The school views the residential service as integral to its provision. Effective and cohesive links across the school result in education and residential staff sharing information. Such an approach results in pupils receiving consistent support and guidance in all areas of school life.

Staff clearly understand pupils' specific needs. These are recorded in detailed and comprehensive care plans with individual strategies to support pupils' development. Pupils have distinct targets to promote their progress, which they are fully aware of, though some targets are not precise in terms of indicating specific, measurable and easily understood objectives. Staff endeavour to involve parents and carers in supporting pupils to work towards their targets. This is an area managers identify as requiring more focus and involvement to ensure pupils have opportunities to enhance their development and progress whilst at home. More frequent home visits are planned to extend liaison with parents and carers. Staff regularly record pupils' progress towards their

targets and review and amend care plans to reflect pupils' changing and developing needs.

Health plans contain clear and relevant information to ensure pupils' health and welfare needs are met. Staff receive training to ensure they fully support the health needs of pupils and any specific medical requirements. Staff are competent in administering medication and receive annual training in this area resulting in a robust system to ensure the safety of pupils. Staff place the emotional and psychological well-being of pupils at the centre of their practice. Staff and pupils have access to a clinical psychologist, school counsellor and speech and language therapist. Cognitive behaviour therapy has recently been introduced, with a programme specifically designed for pupils and delivered by a trained therapist to foster pupils' social and emotional development. The clinical psychologist has effective links with specialist external professionals to support pupils in improving their behaviour.

Pupils report positively on the food provided and they contribute to menu planning for their evening meal in the residential houses. Managers have recently conducted a survey of pupils' views on the lunchtime provision following comments raised in the Pupil Council. Pupils are currently analysing and summarising the results before consideration by the senior management team. Meals are well ordered social occasions with close staff support and supervision. Staff encourage pupils to lead an active lifestyle including physical pursuits for both exercise and enjoyment.

Pupils reside in comfortable, high quality accommodation. There are suitable communal areas for relaxation and pupils personalise their individual bedrooms reflecting their personality and interests.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements in place to ensure residential pupils receive safe care and are protected from harm are outstanding. Pupils report that they feel safe within the residential environment. Safeguarding pupils is of paramount importance and staff undertake extensive training in all aspects of protecting pupils. Recent training includes child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, gun and knife crime and e-safety. Consequently, staff are aware of current safeguarding issues and are confident and competent in identifying signs, indications and risks of harm which pupils may encounter. Staff refer concerns to the head of care who, in the role of designated child protection officer, takes appropriate action to protect pupils, liaising with local safeguarding agencies when necessary.

Pupils do not see bullying as a problem. A pupil reported that 'staff are always around to sort it out'. Managers and staff take bullying in all its forms extremely seriously and staff are undertaking specific training in homophobic bullying to ensure they deal with any such incidents appropriately. The issue of e-safety continues to have a high profile within the school with programmes to educate pupils on safe use of the internet and support for parents to help keep pupils safe. A programme is also commencing for pupils, focusing on on-line grooming and the radicalisation process, raising their awareness of the process and to whom they should report concerns.

Residential pupils benefit from positive behaviour management strategies applied consistently by the staff team. Expectations of appropriate behaviour are clear, based on respect for others, the environment and taking responsibility for oneself. Staff support pupils individually to improve their behaviour, taking into account their complex needs. Detailed, specific risk assessments and crisis management plans identify pupils' particular vulnerabilities and strategies to manage challenging behaviour safely. Physical intervention within the residential houses is extremely rare. Positive, trusting relationships between pupils and staff allow pupils to accept the support staff offer. Staff receive training to manage behaviour and are highly skilled in diffusing and de-

escalating potentially difficult situations. Staff use sanctions for inappropriate behaviour infrequently and where they are applied they are proportionate. Records of sanctions, however, do not always capture the views and response of the pupil in relation to the sanction imposed. Incidents of pupils leaving the residential provision without permission are rare and suitable policies, procedures and protocols with the local police are in place to protect pupils.

A range of health and safety and fire safety checks are regularly carried out including fire drills for residential pupils. Recruitment processes are robust ensuring that only adults who have been checked as being suitable to work with children are employed.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the residential provision are outstanding. Residential pupils benefit from dynamic, passionate leadership and a strongly committed staff team. Senior leaders work cohesively to drive and influence and deliver high standards of care. They ensure the residential community is seen as a central and important aspect of the school. Enhancing pupils' social and emotional well-being is a clear priority. Pupils benefit from this focus through the recent strengthening of the therapeutic team, the introduction of cognitive behaviour therapy and embedding of resilience frameworks into effective practice. A further key strength of leadership and management is the emphasis on ensuring staff have the necessary knowledge and awareness of the wide range of safeguarding issues that potentially may affect pupils. Consequently, pupils benefit from well-trained staff who are alert and vigilant to the risks pupils may encounter and are able to take appropriate action to protect them.

The head of care leads a stable and knowledgeable staff team who continually strive to advance the care and welfare of pupils. High staffing levels allow pupils to benefit from support and guidance specific to their needs resulting in significant improvement in their behaviour. Staff receive regular supervision and appraisal focusing on improving practice and identifying areas for development.

Effective monitoring of the residential provisions ensures high standards are maintained. The internal monitoring by managers is strengthened by detailed reports from an external, independent visitor who considers key records, meets pupils and staff and assesses the environment. In addition, a school governor with lead responsibility for the residential provision visits the residential units each half term to provide further oversight of the standards of care for pupils. Managers have addressed the points for improvement raised at the previous inspection.

Complaints are infrequent and procedures are effective. Pupils know who they can contact if they wish to raise a concern. Staff regularly communicate with parents and carers so that any concerns can be dealt with promptly and effectively without resorting to formal procedures. Pupils share trusting relationships with staff and are confident in approaching staff about any matter knowing they will be listened to and staff will respond to their concern.

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	119029
Social care unique reference number	SC024060
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	9
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 19
Headteacher	Mr Mike Price
Date of previous boarding inspection	25/02/2014
Telephone number	01892 529 144

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