

Centre Academy East Anglia

Centre Academy East Anglia, Church Road, Brettenham, IPSWICH, IP7 7QR

Inspection dates	25/02/2015 to 27/02/2015	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Outcomes for residential pupils	Adequate	3
Quality of residential provision and care	Adequate	3
Residential pupils' safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is adequate because

- Safeguarding arrangements in the school are not consistently adhered to. The designated safeguarding officers have not referred a safeguarding concern, resulting in shortfalls in the action taken.
- Residential pupils are positive regarding the academic progress they make and the social aspects of school. They say they feel safe and do not experience any bullying within the school. Staff welcome and encourage individual potential. Pupils are valued as individuals and encouraged to develop their unique talents and academic strengths.
- The school provides adequate accommodation although decoration is poor in places and in some areas the heating cannot be adjusted.
- The residential provision is appropriately managed. Communication between residential staff and school staff is good, supporting pupils' academic progress.
- There are a number of national minimum standards that have not been met. General monitoring of the provision is poor reducing the capacity for overall improvement.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The welfare only inspection of Centre Academy residential provision took place following a notice period of four hours. The inspection activities included; meetings with the principal, the head teacher, residential staff, the safeguarding officers, and residential pupils. Feedback from pupils, discussions with parents and inspection of documentary records informed the judgements.

Inspection team

Deirdra Keating

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

This is a co-educational day and residential special school for children aged 4 to 19 years facing learning challenges. The school is situated in 10 acres of grounds in the village of Brettenham, Suffolk, 14 miles from Bury St Edmunds and 30 miles from Cambridge. The boarding accommodation is housed in two buildings on the school site. Boarding is provided five nights per week during term time for pupils aged from 9 years to 19 years. There are 46 pupils on roll with 24 boarders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
 - A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards) - 'use of physical restraint'. The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice. (NMS 12.6)
 - Children have an opportunity to contribute their views to the operation of residential provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Children are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. (NMS 17.1)
 - Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them. (NMS 5.4)
 - The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 11)
 - There is a sufficient number of competent staff deployed appropriately, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, to fulfil the school's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the school. (NMS 15.1)
 - All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)
 - The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the Headteacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 20.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Adequate

The outcomes for residential pupils are adequate. They benefit from being in the small and homely residential provision. Relationships between pupils are harmonious. Pupils are tolerant and supportive of one another, resulting in a safe and inclusive atmosphere. They make friends and value the social aspects of being at the school. There is no bullying; pupils are generally kind and respectful to one another.

Residential pupils demonstrate an understanding of the school rules and most pupils overcome behavioural difficulties that have hindered their past learning and attainment. As a result, most pupils make consistent progress and identify their unique potential. This raises hope and aspirations for the future.

Pupils are generally positive about staff although unexpected resignations have impacted negatively on some pupils' experience of the school. Contingency staffing arrangements have offered continuity of care for pupils. Despite this, inconsistencies in expectations of the staff have unsettled pupils and contributed to some pupils' absence from education. Pupils are generally disgruntled with some aspects of the organisation of prep time and dual usage of the Coach House common room by external therapists. The majority of pupils spoken to feel their views are not influential or valued by the senior staff. There is a reluctance to join the school council as they feel this will not change anything.

Pupils benefit from a good choice of healthy meal options and regular physical exercise, supporting them to have healthy lifestyles. Therapeutic support is offered to pupils as agreed in the assessment of educational needs. However, one pupil has waited over a year for occupational therapy despite it being requested on a statement of educational needs. This could impact on ability to manage personal tasks and build independence.

Pupils learn to manage their time and develop their organisational skills at the school. They competently use public transport to travel to school and enjoy the camaraderie of travelling together. This helps them to become confident to travel independently.

Quality of residential provision and care

Adequate

The quality of the residential provision is adequate. Several national minimum standards are not met although these do not compromise pupil's health or safety unduly.

Pastoral support is varied. For some pupils, staff changes are positive, leaving pupils feeling secure and supported, while others feel unsettled. Reduced staff numbers have impacted on the range of activities and opportunities offered to pupils. This affects their enjoyment and engagement with the school. The interim staff arrangements have provided pupils with continuity in provision of academic support.

The school manages pupils' health needs well. Medicines are administered with care and meticulously recorded. Staff receive first aid training, enabling them to deal with minor injuries and accidents. Staff are mindful about pupil wellbeing, remaining vigilant and observant to changes in behaviours. Pupils spoken to say they can approach staff for emotional support although the changes to the staff team have left some without familiar staff.

The school provides fresh food cooked from carefully sourced ingredients. Catering staff are open to ideas and suggestions from pupils. Healthy options include fresh fruit and salad bar options each day. Pupils benefit from nutritionally balanced meals and increasingly make healthy choices.

Accommodation is in the main house and the Coach House, located in the well-kept grounds. Pupils benefit from the safe rural environment and surrounding grounds. The Coach House provides spacious rooms where pupils can study and socialise. The kitchen in the Coach House is very small and some appliances are unclean. Paintwork is grubby and carpets are worn in places. An unpleasant odour permeates the communal shower rooms. The main house is cosy and homely; however, heating can be erratic resulting in some bedrooms and one landing area that are stiflingly hot. Overall, this does not provide a good standard of accommodation for pupils.

Pupils are able to telephone home and receive calls. The provision of several new telephone lines has made this easier for pupils. Parents reiterate this and say they are reassured they can always get through to the school and contact pupils. In addition, staff are readily available to discuss any concerns with parents. This supports family contact and enables pupils to feel reassured while staying away from home.

Residential pupils' safety

Adequate

The safety of residential pupils is adequate. The school has good recruitment systems to ensure the suitability of staff. Checks and references enable the school to make appointments that are considered and suitable. Personnel files evidence that checks are consistent and meticulous, safeguarding pupils against unsuitable adults.

Staff receive training to safeguard pupil welfare and there is evidence of joint working with external agencies to safeguard children. Despite this, on one occasion a disclosure from a pupil was not followed up; staff failed to pursue a concern raised by a pupil about a member of staff. There are no records to evidence that the staff investigated the allegation and no evidence of a referral to the local area designated officer. In this instance, staff did not follow organisational and local procedures to assure the safety of a pupil.

Staff have good relationships with residential pupils and behaviour management is consistent. The general behavioural expectations in the school are high and the atmosphere is respectful and calm. This encourages pupils to feel safe and relaxed in the residential provision. In instances where there has been unacceptable behaviour, the recording is poor. Several entries have no date and no record of follow up discussions with pupils. This reduces opportunities to help pupils reflect and learn from their behaviours.

The school is located in a rural position and pupils require transport to the nearest town. Pupils adhere well to safety rules and do not leave the site without prior planning. The accommodation is carefully managed to provide safe accommodation for pupils. Fire prevention equipment is checked and the school is compliant with fire regulations. All appliances are regularly serviced and robust monitoring of the premises has eliminated hazards. This reduces the risk of accidents to pupils.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Adequate

The leadership and management of the residential provision are adequate. The aims of the provision are shared openly with prospective pupils and their parents. Pupils are prepared well before joining the school and induction is planned in accordance with their individual needs. This gives pupils time to adjust to being away from home. Pupils are treated equally as individuals. Assessment of their needs is comprehensive providing staff with a good understanding of each pupil. They are given equal opportunities to recognise their strengths and progress in the school.

The school has experienced a period of staff changes. Management of the residential provision

has been difficult due to the sudden departure of staff. The senior management team have worked hard to maintain contingency plans. While this has provided consistency in staffing, changes have caused insecurity and unrest amongst pupils and their parents.

The school has received a number of complaints. These have been managed properly and responded to by the principal, ensuring that identified issues are resolved.

A dedicated core team of experienced staff remain at the school. The staff teams represent a mix of age, experience, and expertise. The number of staff on duty provides enough supervision and interaction with pupils although the vacant posts have limited the range of activities provided. These vacancies are being addressed and new appointments are being made.

New staff are supported in their roles and receive regular supervision. Other staff have not benefitted from regular supervision, despite practice issues being identified. This means that inconsistencies in practice are not always addressed.

Records personal to pupils' lives are minimal and stored securely. Records are compiled in consultation with parents and hold mandatory information about pupils. Expansion and development of these records has been identified by the school as an area for improvement.

The principal of the school and housemaster of the Coach House have undertaken a review of the residential provision. This evaluates the provision but is not set against the national minimum standards. The school has not gauged views of parents or pupils and there is little evidence of using pupils' views to improve the provision. Monitoring is poor, for example, there are differences in the quality of records and some do not meet national minimum standards. External monitoring is varied. The reports are in a letter format and concerns that relate to the physical environment are raised within this text. However, there is no evidence that the required records are checked during the monitoring visits.

The shortfalls identified at the previous inspection have been addressed in the main although a lack of understanding of the national minimum standards has left one recommendation unmet.

Overall the school has maintained pupils' basic safety and supervision throughout a difficult period. There are clear development plans to appoint more staff and generally improve outcomes and experiences for pupils.

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	124890
Social care unique reference number	SC024588
DfE registration number	935/6058

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	Independent residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	24
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Salthouse
Date of previous boarding inspection	20/11/2013
Telephone number	01449 736404
Email address	admin@centreacademy.net

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