

# Ripplevale School

Ripplevale School, Chapel Lane, Ripple, Deal, Kent, CT14 8JG

**Inspection dates** 23/03/2015 to 24/03/2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
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

- Residential pupils make and sustain positive, appropriate and lasting relationships with the staff. They describe the school as 'homely' and akin to being part of a family. This secure base brings the structure and routine pupils need to make significant strides in their personal, social and behavioural development.
- Excellent safeguarding arrangements ensure the protection of pupil's safety and welfare. Within an educative culture, pupils are equipped with the information they need to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders and managers strive to secure continuing improvements. The residential provision forms a very small part of the overall school but this does not detract from its value. Staff across all disciplines pay high regard to this aspect of the overall service.
- Residential pupils enjoy the boarding experience because they are extensively involved in its planning and on-going development. Their views and opinions really count. They develop a genuine sense of ownership about the school and are proud to be a part of it.
- The superior quality of the accommodation is an indicator of the excellent value base of the school. The principal says, 'Our children deserve the best across every aspect of our provision and we try to ensure this is what they get.'
- Parents commend the quality of the care provided by the residential team. Parents of very new pupils say, 'my child has settled really quickly because they feel so welcomed and at ease.' New pupils say, 'I knew straight away that I wanted to come here. It's really homely.' Staff members say, 'I couldn't think about working anywhere else, I love this school.'
- All of the national minimum standards are met. Some are exceeded.

**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

This full standalone welfare inspection was conducted over two days by one inspector. The residential provision currently has two pupils in residence. Both boys were spoken with at length. They were also joined for activities and mealtimes. Key senior staff were interviewed and relevant records were scrutinised. A full tour of the premises was conducted. Parents were interviewed over the telephone and positive responses were received from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

The school has recently expanded its provision to now include a Sixth Form; one of the residential pupils is considering this option. Due to a continuing lack of referrals for the residential provision, the directors are keeping this service under review.

## Inspection team

Sophie Wood

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Ripplevale School is an independent special needs day and residential special school. It caters for a maximum of 80 boys from six to 18 years of age and who are statemented as being on the autistic spectrum with associated spectrums.

The residential provision is managed by the principal, a team leader and a team of care staff. At the time of this inspection two boys were accommodated in one designated residential house on the main school site near Deal, Kent.

The residential provision was last inspected in July 2013.

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

- Bring a uniformed approach in respect of the quality of all written risk assessments
- Review all of the measures which potentially restrict pupil's abilities to take appropriate risks.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Residential pupils make fantastic progress across all areas of their personal, social, educational and behavioural development. This is because they receive highly individualised care from staff who prove their commitment to them. Key workers demonstrate their belief in pupil's abilities. They nurture, challenge and support each pupil to develop self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. As a result, pupils make rapid progress in relation to their starting points.

A culture of acceptance and tolerance encourages pupils to value others as well as themselves. Staff delight in the unprompted behaviour of existing pupils when new ones join the school. Their comments include, '[pupil's name] has been fantastic with [new pupil's name], explaining things to him, befriending him and continually asking if he's okay. I'm so proud of [pupil's name].' New pupils readily settle into this embracing and welcoming environment.

Some pupil's background histories include behaviours which have challenged previous services. A number of pupils have been out of mainstream education as a result of their difficulties. This school sets immediate and clear behavioural expectations alongside its assurance to give pupils a fresh start. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and a commitment to start anew.

Residential pupils reciprocate the respectful treatment they receive from the residential team. They talk about different staff members in terms of their attributes as they see them. Quotes from pupils include, '[staff name] is really caring and good to talk to if you're worried about anything but [staff name] is really good to talk to about music and stuff I'm interested in.' Pupils trust and value these genuine and caring relationships.

A wide range of activities are provided in response to pupil's requests. The small and therefore intimate nature of the residential provision utilises daily conversations and discussions as naturally occurring consultation processes. Residential pupils routinely influence the routines and structure of the residential programme.

Residential pupils are consistently and sensitively supported to explore their own unique difficulties and issues. They develop great insight and improved coping strategies. These skills equip them with the resilience they need for the next stages in their lives.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

A new Head of School is working closely with the principal and residential team leader to improve upon the holistic oversight and approach with regards to care planning for all of the school's pupils. Work is underway to strengthen and improve the already good quality of target setting and the monitoring of progress to ensure that pupils achieve optimum opportunities and results.

This school challenges and sets high expectations. Within the residential provision, pupils are directly involved in setting their own targets and goals. They effectively own their care plans and understand what they need to do. Rich and appropriate reward systems encourage rapid progress while necessary consequences encourage pupils to reflect if they make mistakes. Key workers are able to heavily invest in detailed discussions and one-to-one time with the pupils because they are given the time and resources to do this productive work.

Excellent communication systems between school and residential teams ensures a consistent approach and understanding is achieved for the benefit of the pupils. Great care is also taken to ensure that residential pupils also receive a clear beginning and end to school and residential time. Consistency is achieved without pupils feeling that they are continuously 'at school.'

Precise health care arrangements ensure that residential pupils receive the support and advice they need. Due to the nature of the school's weekly boarding provision, residential pupils remain registered with their health care practitioners from their home addresses. This does not detract from the clear arrangements which effectively support pupils when they are in residence. On the contrary, excellent local arrangements enhance health outcomes for pupils. One parent said, 'I'm really pleased that the school arranged an orthodontist for my son. This has been a real success.'

Residential pupils are provided with superior quality accommodation. A beautifully decorated and very well maintained building is furnished with high quality fittings and equipment. Residential pupils look after their bedrooms which are highly personalised with treasured items. An appropriately secure and very well equipped medical room is readily accessible. This, combined with a staff team which is appropriately trained in first aid and medicines administration ensures pupil's immediate health care needs are met.

Staff across all departments understand the concept of good quality risk assessment procedures. Pupils are suitably protected because safeguarding risks are minimised in practice. However, there are a few examples of different written formats in current use. The quality of some of these documents is therefore variable. It is recommended that the school applies the same stringent criteria for all of its written risk assessments.

The needs of current residential pupils negates the need for intensive external health care input, such as mental health services and therapeutic provision. However, senior staff understand such referral processes and have a thorough understanding of local professional provision, including how this would be accessed if required. The mental and emotional well being of pupils is anticipated and protected.

All meals enjoyed by the pupils are of high quality, varied choice and rich in nutritional content. Comments from pupils include, 'The food is great, there is always enough' and 'We are often asked about any menu changes we would like to make.'

High staffing levels ensure pupils receive the individual attention they need. In addition, a generous budget and excellent transport provision enables regular off-site activities. Pupils enjoy trying new experiences and developing their interests and hobbies. Fishing is a current favourite.

Residential pupils say they can readily make contact with their family members and friends during their time at school. Parents and carers provide similar feedback. Their comments include, 'I can 'phone and visit whenever I choose. the school is welcoming and always ready to communicate with me.'

## **Residential pupils' safety**

## **Outstanding**

Excellent safeguarding arrangements place the care and protection of the pupils at the very centre of the school's practice. No new staffing appointments within the residential provision have been made since the last inspection but robust recruitment practice is understood. Furthermore, it is demonstrated by the recent recruitment of an ancillary staff member.

On-going safeguarding and child protection training ensures residential staff are well versed with the school's procedures. The team leader is currently undertaking additional safeguarding training commensurate with her role. Staff are aware of the wider safeguarding risks for the pupils and this is factored into their training, guidance and advice. For example, staff understand the risks associated with being missing and sexual exploitation. Regular staff meetings always feature welfare discussions.

The school's designated child protection officer (DCPO) demonstrates her wealth of experience and knowledge through her diligent approach. Meticulous record keeping maintains accurate accounts of safeguarding and welfare concerns. This practice monitors potential patterns and trends. It ensures pupils are assisted at the earliest possible opportunity. Consultations and referrals to the local authority safeguarding agency are swiftly made wherever necessary. The same due diligence is paid towards potential staffing issues. A thorough investigation and disciplinary process is in place.

Residential pupils speak knowledgeably about their own safety needs. They understand the behavioural expectations of the school and confirm that rare incidents of bullying are well managed. They also say, 'It doesn't happen in boarding though. We get on fine.' Pupils also refer to the educative guidance they receive in school about wider safeguarding matters. Comments include, 'We talk a lot about internet safety. People who post stupid pictures on Instagram are asking for trouble.' A rolling programme of e-safety is systematically delivered by a dedicated teacher in an appropriately hard hitting manner. He says, 'We cannot mess around with our children. They are already vulnerable. They need to understand to keep themselves safe.'

Staff are suitably trained in the use of behaviour management techniques. Physical interventions are sometimes necessary in school but there has been no recent use within the residential provision. The staff recognise potential triggers quickly and de-escalation techniques are effective. This small, nurturing environment and team is also conducive to the promotion of positive behaviour.

Residential pupils are not absent and they do not go missing from school. High staffing levels ensure their whereabouts are known at all times but this is not oppressive. The low level use of restrictive measures serve to promote safety and welfare. For example, the medical room is locked when not in use. However, access to the kitchen is sometimes restricted also. The team is asked to review this practice through the enabling use of risk assessments, so as to increase independence opportunities.

Residential pupils stay in a safe and appropriately secure physical environment. Regular health and safety checks are thoroughly conducted. Pupils understand the fire evacuation plan and drills are frequently practised. A rolling programme of electrical and other safety checks is diligently monitored, with the use of approved external contractors where necessary.

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

Outstanding leadership and management arrangements ensures the delivery of a very well coordinated and effective provision. The wider school team routinely comes together as a collective. This provides seamless partnership working for the benefit of the residential pupils. This results in excellent quality, highly individualised care planning arrangements.

Thorough succession planning demonstrates a pro-active approach. The current DCPO is undertaking a lengthy handover process to ensure this vital role is precisely understood by the residential team leader in anticipation of the additional safeguarding duties that she will undertake. Residential team members often support school time activities. There is no separation or allegiance to one particular aspect of the provision. Staff work to an ethos of belonging to the whole school.

A cohesive residential staff team effectively responds to the needs of the pupils. This group provides consistency and has an acute understanding of the pupil's needs. In addition to regularly refreshed mandatory courses, staff are encouraged to complete further training to develop their professional knowledge and skills. Examples include additional safeguarding training for the team leader. Residential staff receive superb levels of support and guidance. Their individual

supervision meetings are used to thoroughly explore their additional development.

The school is responsive to inspection processes and readily implements recommendations and suggestions. Three areas for improvement were identified at the last inspection and these have all been embraced and implemented.

No complaints have been received since the last inspection. Parents say, 'I've had absolutely no reason to be dissatisfied in any way but I am more than confident to speak with anyone in the school.'

Effective monitoring systems seek to ensure the quality of the service provision remains high. The school responds to the changing needs of pupils by regularly reviewing and changing its service. Its recent development of a Sixth Form provision is welcomed by pupils and parents.

Much current debate is occurring about the potential negatives of such a small residential provision. Directors are concerned that residential pupils might be missing out in some aspects due to having such a small peer group. No immediate plans for change are imminent but the longer term is being considered. This is a challenging question for the school to ask itself. It is demonstrative of its practice of self review, in the best interests of the 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118995
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC023668
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6047

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>	2
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	6 to 18
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Ted Schofield
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	09/07/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 373866
<b>Email address</b>	info@ripplevaleschool.co.uk

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