

Mount Tamar Special School

Row Lane, St Budeaux, Plymouth, Devon, PL5 2PY

Inspection dates	21/01/2016 to 22/01/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Requires improvement	3
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- The residential provision is very well-managed in the best interests of children and young people. The staff team feel really well supported and benefit from strong leadership. They are highly motivated to provide children and young people with a really positive residential experience. Relationships between children and young people and residential staff are a particular strength of the service. The consistency of the staff team is excellent and children and young people really benefit from the team's clear expectations and high aspirations.
- Children and young people who use the residential service receive very personalised care. This supports their progress as, for example, it helps them to improve their attendance and engagement at school. Their behaviour both within school and at home also improves. Within the residential provision, behaviour is managed very effectively through positive interactions and considered discussions. Any incidents are managed sensitively. The use of restraint and sanctions are minimal and there have been no missing from care incidents since October 2014. Children and young people are helped to reflect on their behaviour and the impact it has on themselves and others. A restorative approach is taken to help children and young people develop their awareness and reflection which improves their behaviour over time.
- Children and young people enjoy opportunities that they might not otherwise have. These include learning to swim and dive and going on holiday abroad. These opportunities, combined with day-to-day activities such as playing sport and board games, help children and young people to develop confidence in themselves and aspire to achieve other targets. This in turn contributes to improving their life chances.

- Comments from children and young people and their parents are consistently positive. A young person told the inspector; 'I really love it here. It is great'. One parent said; 'this school and residential service has been a lifeline for us, my son really loves it here, he feels he fits in'.
- The physical environment of the residential provision needs improving to provide good standards throughout. The school has just secured substantial funding for extensive renovations and refurbishment of the entire residential accommodation. This work is expected to start at Easter 2016.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Ensure the physical environment provides good standards throughout.

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Norma Welsby

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

This residential special school is a maintained school. It provides education and care and has up to 101 day pupils including 24 residential pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The residential provision operates as a support for educational needs. The building is situated on the school site. The residential provision is open four nights a week during term time. Most pupils attend for two nights each week. A highly structured routine is offered. A variety of on and off site activities are available.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Children and young people enjoy their overnight stays within the residential provision. They have a strong affiliation to it and respect the staff team. They make good academic and personal progress and as a result their life chances are enhanced by their residential experience.

The residential provision is well organised and well run for the benefit of children and young people. After school routines are structured and include a good range of interesting activities. Children and young people take every opportunity to participate in the programme of activities as well as enjoying time relaxing with friends or spending quiet time in their bedrooms.

A particularly strong feature of the residential provision is the trusted and secure relationships that children and young people enjoy with the staff team. The staffing arrangements provide children and young people with excellent continuity of care. The exceptionally low turnover in staffing means that staff know the children and young people very well. They also know their family circumstances well. In this way they are able to provide sensitive and individualized care. Children and young people have positive attachments to staff, they feel cared for and safe.

The staff team are very effective in gathering the views and feelings of children and young people. A new school parliament is being established to ensure children and young people are listened to across the school and residential provision. Also, on a daily basis, the residential staff hold group discussions with the children and young people. This time is used to reflect on the day and what has gone well. Staff are particularly skilled at encouraging all individuals to speak out and give their considered view and if appropriate to identify how things might have gone better. Every opportunity is taken to give praise and celebrate achievements.

Children and young people enjoy good nourishing food during their overnight stays. This has improved since the last inspection. There is better access to provisions for after school snacks and supper and a cooked meal is prepared each evening. During the inspection several young people complimented the evening chef who is a new appointment. Mealtimes are a very sociable occasion with staff eating with children and young people all of whom are engaged in lots of discussion.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

The residential accommodation requires improvement and firm arrangements are in place for extensive renovations and refurbishment. Considerable funds have been allocated and work is due to commence during Easter 2016. In all other respects the quality of care and support is very good. Staff work incredibly hard to overcome the shortfalls of the environment, effectively limiting its impact on the children and young

people. All staff and children and young people are delighted that the improvements are taking place, which will provide all young people with a single bedroom with ensuite shower and much improved communal facilities.

Staff across the school work effectively together in the best interests of children and young people. The value and impact of the residential provision is widely recognised and appreciated. The referral and induction process for new residential pupils is extremely sensitive and geared to meeting individual needs. Children and young people are invited to visit the residential provision, stay for tea and sample activities as well as experiencing overnight stays. Children and young people benefit from residential staff having consistent boundaries and clear expectations in terms of engagement and behaviour. Award schemes are in place that support children and young people to develop a wide range of life skills. This contributes to children and young people growing in confidence and feeling better prepared as they work towards their next step after school.

Residential pupils benefit from good nurturing care and busy evening routines. They feel that staff know them well and they are able to talk openly to them. Staff are sensitive and discrete in the practices and treat children and young people with respect and dignity. The care that children and young people receive in this setting helps them to develop a positive self-view and to build their emotional resilience as they mature into young adults. Good emphasis is also placed on helping young people to live healthy lifestyles. As well as providing nutritional food, children and young people are physically active through for example regularly swimming, using scooters and playing football.

Parents and carers convey a very complimentary opinion of the residential provision and the commitment of the head of care and her staff team. One parent expressed; 'The staff are great – they remain the same staff which is really important. My son knows and trusts them and they really know him and how to respond to him'.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The safety of children and young people is given high priority. There are effective safeguarding arrangements in place and staff have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities. Staff are well trained and experienced in responding to any concerns. Children and young people benefit from a consistent staff team that know them and their families well. There is effective communication and good working relationships established with the local authority safeguarding team. Within the school there are clear lines of reporting and clearly identifiable designated safeguarding individuals.

Positive behaviour is consistently and effectively promoted in the residential provision and the good practice demonstrated here is being disseminated across the school. When children and young people display risky or unsociable behaviour they receive clear and positive support from staff. They know how they are expected to behave. Their respect for residential staff and their desire to continue to attend the residential provision means that incidents are usually resolved quickly. Staff help children and

young people to reflect on their behaviour and where possible they use restorative measures. In this way children and young people learn to manage their emotions more effectively and consider others more.

The use of physical restraint and sanctions are rare. Staff are well trained and really good emphasis is placed on de-escalation techniques. The quality of relationships that children and young people and staff enjoy ensure that difficult situations are managed in a sensitive and considered way. The last missing from care was 15 months ago and this was due to a young person struggling with being away from home overnight. This situation was carefully assessed and the young person now benefits from an extended day, rather than staying overnight.

There is a clear and robust system in place for countering bullying. Really good attention is given to supporting children and young people to respect individuality. A repeated compliment from parents and carers is that their child has been able to 'fit in' so well. Any form of discrimination is challenged and children and young people are provided with a safe environment to be themselves, mix with peers and have fun.

All staff who work with children and young people are carefully selected and vetted. Turnover is extremely low in the residential provision and the only new appointment since the last inspection has been the chef. Staff are well supported through training, staff meetings and practice- related supervision and the head of care regularly works alongside her team. In this way, care practices are effectively monitored and reviewed to ensure they meet individual needs and remain child-centred.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Good

The culture of the residential provision is characterised by high expectations of the service it provides and high aspirations for all the children and young people. The head of care and the staff team have worked together effectively for years and they know each of the children and young people so well that they are able to provide really personalised care and support. They have been effective in contributing to securing the extensive renovation and refurbishment of the residential provision.

The head of care is suitably qualified and experienced. All the team have achieved at least a Level 3 Diploma in Residential Childcare. On-going training is provided and the head of care carefully monitors training needs to ensure refresher training is provided in a timely way. There are good staffing levels provided each evening to ensure children and young people are safe and can enjoy a wide range of activities. Staff confirm that they feel the benefit of strong leadership and feel really well supported in their role.

There is a robust complaints procedure in place. Children and young people are aware of their right to raise concerns. When they do, they are responded to quickly and fairly and

every effort is made to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome. While records are maintained, not all fully detail the positive outcomes achieved. There is an excellent relationship with parents and carers. Several parents spoke of the 'trust' they have in the residential provision and the difference it was making to the lives of their child.

Staff maintain good records which are securely stored. The residential provision has up-to-date policies and procedures and works effectively across the school to keep abreast of changes and developments. Regular independent monitoring visits to the residential provision are undertaken. Some improvements to these have taken place since the last inspection. Further consideration is being given to ensuring these really contribute to keeping children and young people safe and to further improvements to the service.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	1022306
Social care unique reference number	SC038087
DfE registration number	

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	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	24
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	4 to16
Headteacher	Brett Storry
Date of previous boarding inspection	03/03/2015
Telephone number	01752 365128
Email address	mount.tamar.school@plymouth.gov.uk

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