

The New School at West Heath

The New School at West Heath, Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1SR

Inspection dates	11/01/2016 to 13/01/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
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

- Residential pupils receive an outstanding quality of care. The residential provision is fully integrated into the school. Staff from all departments work effectively together to identify and respond to each residential pupil's unique needs. Residential pupils are positive about their boarding experience.
- Safeguarding arrangements within the school are good. Links with external safeguarding agencies are strong. Residential pupils feel safe.
- Residential pupils are extremely well prepared for adulthood and moving on from the school. Excellent quality accommodation provides a homely environment for residential pupils' weekly stays.
- Shortfalls identified include recording of missing from school, records are not easy to audit to ensure all relevant procedures are followed. Circumstances leading to serious accidents are not consistently recorded on some individual pupils' files.
- Safer recruitment is compromised by a lack of written risk assessment when some staff commence work prior to completion of all vetting checks.
- Care plans do not contain reference to drug testing strategies to show progress and relevant review dates. Only five out of 20 care staff have a first aid qualification. This limits the number of staff who could offer immediate first aid to residential pupils if required.

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?

- Review missing from school reports to ensure they clearly demonstrate actions taken and that relevant protocols are followed
- Ensure events leading to an injury or accident are fully documented in individual residential pupil's records
- Ensure any drug testing strategy is documented as part of an individual pupil's care plan with relevant review dates
- Ensure written risk assessments are completed if any staff member commences work in the school under supervision
- Consider providing first aid training for additional members of the boarding staff team

Information about this inspection

After announcing the inspection, the social care inspector was on-site 4 hours later. All accommodation areas were inspected, with the exception of the 'post 19' house. Discussions took place with the senior leadership team, care, therapy and teaching staff. Views of residential pupils were gathered through discussions, shared meal times and two evening off-site activities. Observations of the whole school staff team handover took place. Feedback from parents and external professionals was gathered via telephone. Documents relating to the safety and welfare of residential pupils were sampled.

Inspection team

Anna Williams

Lead social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

This is an independent co-educational residential special school situated in Kent. The school provides places for day and boarding pupils between the ages of 11 to 19 years. Pupils have emotional and social communication difficulties. The school has eight boarding houses located within the grounds of the school. At the time of the inspection, there were 26 residential pupils.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Residential pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other. They build trust with supportive care staff. Through these warm interactions, residential pupils build confidence and make extensive progress from their individual starting points. Residential pupils commented 'staff are great, they listen and support me', and 'my key worker spends time with me and we speak about my targets'. Residential pupils are extremely positive about the impact that boarding has had on their lives. This includes their learning and friendships made. Academic outcomes for residential pupils are closely tracked. This ensures individual pupils' educational needs are consistently promoted by all school staff.

A strength of the residential provision is how well pupils are prepared for independence. A residential pupil commented 'I am a lot more independent now, I have done lots of life skills'. Personal targets focus pupils on achievable goals like budgeting, shopping, cooking and other household tasks. They speak enthusiastically about learning new skills. Residential pupils successfully learn how to travel safely in the community. This prepares them for adulthood or further education.

Behaviour within the residential provision is good. No bullying is identified by residential pupils. They are positive about their time spent in boarding. They relax together in the evenings. Some pupils play guitars, others spend time on computers or access the local community. Through these experiences they develop personally and socially. For some, they learn how to socialise and live harmoniously with others for the first time.

The pupil voice is strong within both the school and the residential provision. Some residential pupils write their own care plans. They create and review their own unique strategies. This ensures they fully understand and engage in their own journey through the school.

A residential pupil said 'the best thing about boarding is the activities I do'. These are varied. Physical health and wellbeing is well-promoted throughout the school. Individual health care needs are identified and fully met.

Safeguarding is a high priority within the school as a whole. The welfare of residential pupils is taken seriously. All staff understand their personal responsibility in achieving this. The strong senior leadership team share high aspirations for each residential pupil. These ambitions are put into practice in the day-to-day support residential pupils receive from competent care staff members. Matters relating to equality and diversity are well-celebrated throughout the school and residential provision.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Exceedingly good arrangements are in place to support new residential pupils. Taster days provide initial visits to the school. Residential pupils then commence their academic time as part of the 'HEART' centre. This provision is for both for learning and therapy. From here, residential pupils build confidence and successfully transition into full time lessons and whole school life. A residential pupil commented 'it helped me doing it that way, it helped me settle in. I got lots of support from HEART staff. If you are a new student or just having a bad day, you can go to HEART and they help you'.

Healthcare arrangements within the school are highly effective. Residential pupils engage regularly in physical activities such as swimming, rock climbing, football and cricket. This benefits their physical health and social development. Residential pupils' emotional well-being is sensitively managed through bespoke therapeutic support. Individual mentors offer guidance on specific topics such as substance misuse. Arrangements for the administration of medication are safe and effective.

Overwhelmingly positive feedback has been received from parents and placing authorities about the quality of care. A parent commented 'I feel all the boarding and school staff are good at spotting the strengths in each young person. They give each child their focus and support to help them achieve'.

Accommodation is of an exceptional standard. Newly refurbished houses provide both high-quality and child-friendly fixtures and fittings. The more well-established houses present to a very good standard. Residential pupils use the well-designed accommodation to extend their life skills, such as cooking. They speak positively of their weekly lodgings. Using individual budgets, they creatively personalise their own bedroom spaces. This produces warm and welcoming housing for residential pupils to stay in.

High quality catering arrangements offer residential pupils a wide choice of lunchtime foods. Evening meals take place in the individual boarding houses. These are social occasions where the whole house sit together and eat the homemade meal. Many residential pupils assist with either cooking for the house, or prepare their own meals. Themed nights celebrate different cultures and provide new foods to try.

Carefully planned activities cater for a wide range of interests and emerging talents. After-school clubs provide residential pupils opportunities to extend learning in topics such as English, music, cookery, art and textiles. Visits to local music café gives residential pupils a platform to perform. Those that do take to the stage receive warm encouragement from peers and local people alike. Further community integration takes place through attendance at youth clubs, local fitness clubs and self-defence classes. Leisure activities such as cinema visits, bowling or shopping trips regularly occur. Additional trips such as to a farm, local football matches, the theatre or restaurants all further enhance residential pupils' boarding experience.

Residential pupils views are captured in a variety of ways. Regular house meetings take place to discuss activity planners and menus. The boarding council meets termly to focus on residential issues. Changes are made as a result of these meetings such as requests for evening events. Additionally an annual boarding survey canvasses opinions, responses to the latest survey are positive. This demonstrates to residential pupils that their feelings about how the houses are run are valued and listened to.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The senior leadership team maintain strong links with external safeguarding agencies. Staff members receive regular safeguarding training which includes topics such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. If concerns arise senior staff liaise with relevant parties, including the police, to share information and participate in multi-agency meetings. Residential staff demonstrate good awareness around on-line safety and overall safeguarding procedures. Positive feedback has been received from a safeguarding professional who commented 'they have very robust safeguarding processes and...they take this aspect of their role with young people very seriously'.

There has been one brief restraint since the previous inspection. Sanctions sampled are fair and

appropriate. Residential pupils add their personal views to the sanction records. Behaviour seen during the inspection was good. Residential pupils stay in a friendly and supportive environment. Staff work efficiently together to anticipate any potential trigger points and de-escalate situations effectively. Residential pupils respond well to staff members who offer nurture and consistent, clear boundaries.

Processes for the recruitment of new staff follow safer recruitment guidance. However, two members of staff commenced work while recruitment checks were still 'in progress'. A verbal assessment of supervision levels required took place. However, there was no formal written risk assessment evaluating supervision required for the staff's unique roles and their access to residential pupils while checks were being processed. This compromised otherwise robust recruitment practice. Residential pupils are suitably and actively involved in the recruitment process of potential staff.

Effective systems are in place to make sure that routine maintenance of health and safety equipment takes place. This ensures the well-being of all in the school. Residential pupils know what action to take in case of an emergency evacuation. Fire drills also take place at different times of day to regularly refresh pupils and staff alike in relevant procedures.

Since the previous inspection, there have been seven missing from school episodes. Staff liaise appropriately with local police, parents and carers to locate residential pupils. Records of these missing incidents require improvement to show clearly the actions taken by staff both during and after the event. Currently information is captured within multiple records. This makes it difficult for the senior leadership team to evaluate if protocols have been correctly followed.

A small number of residential pupils have received external medical attention following an accident or injury. Records are not clear about what happened leading up to such incidents. This means these individual pupils' files do not contain comprehensive information to review and reflect upon to assist learning from such serious occurrences.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

A clear statement of boarding principles is followed in the day-to-day care of residential pupils. An interactive development plan links directly to school evaluation documents. This ensures that identified areas for improvement, including within the residential provision, are immediately highlighted to senior staff. Advances since the previous inspection include all staff attending 'MIND' mental health training. Two new after-school music clubs have proved popular with residential pupils.

Trustees take an active role in the oversight of the residential provision and safeguarding arrangements. External monitoring visits take place regularly. During these visits, residential pupils' views are routinely sought. The visitor identifies areas for improvement which additionally feed into the school development plan. This provides another way in which the school strives to develop and positively evolve.

Staff members receive regular supervision from experienced senior staff. The Deputy Principal has recently started a Master's degree, specifically relating to supervision and research based leadership of a social care provision. This demonstrates the drive within the senior leadership team to continually develop professionally and improve the school.

Previous points to improve have been addressed. The statement of purpose is now more explicit in explaining the school's approach to working with residential pupils. Policies and procedures have been revised. They now fully reflect current guidance and regulations.

Overall, care plans and risk assessments are improved. They involve residential pupils and demonstrate their progress and good outcomes achieved. The school has a zero-tolerance approach to substance misuse. Residential pupils can be subject to short-term drug tests which are performed by school staff. This forms part of wider support packages which help some residential pupils to reduce and cease their drug use. However, this strategy does not form part of individual residential pupil's care plans. As a result, progress made and reasonable review dates of such tests are not recorded.

Residential pupils know how to complain. They are listened to if they do. Leaders and managers respond to concerns or complaints raised and demonstrate learning from such feedback. For example, a new staff code of conduct has been recently introduced. Actions taken following any feedback received are now fully recorded.

Training opportunities for staff are good. Examples of courses include medication administration and behaviour management techniques. However, only five out of 20 care staff have undertaken first aid training. Consequently, there are only a very small number of trained care staff to offer immediate first aid to residential pupils across the boarding houses, overnight and during evening off-site trips. The staff team is experienced. All but one have achieved a relevant level three qualification or higher. This provides residential pupils with a well-qualified staff team.

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	131611
Social care unique reference number	SC024063
DfE registration number	886/6079

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	26
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	10 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Christina Wells
Date of previous boarding inspection	02/12/2014
Telephone number	01732 460553
Email address	principal@westheathschool.com

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