

# Sky College

Pickeridge Close, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7HW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	21 March 2016 to 23 March 2016	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- Residential pupils thrive in a caring, nurturing environment. With the support of skilled and experienced staff, they make good progress in managing their behaviours and developing independence skills. A parent said, 'my son has come on [in] leaps and bounds.'
- Leadership and management of the residential provision is good. The registered manager is very well supported by the head teacher, the senior management team and governors.
- Partnerships with parents and professionals are extremely effective. Parents report that they are routinely kept up to date and informed of their sons' achievements and progress.
- Residential pupils' safety is excellent and their well-being is of paramount importance. They are safe because of the effectively implemented safeguarding procedures. Dynamic risk assessments enable residential pupils to take safe, age-appropriate risks.
- A dedicated, motivated and passionate staff team supports the residential pupils to take part in a wide range of activities. The staff work tirelessly to ensure that residential pupils receive the best possible care. Consultation and inclusion take place routinely, and in doing so staff treat the residential pupils with respect, and the pupils feel valued.

## **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?

- Enhance further the development plan to include clear objectives and actions that are residential-specific. In particular, include how the registered manager will monitor and review the provision to improve the outcomes of the residential pupils.
- Ensure that there are sufficient staff supporting residential pupils to enable the registered manager adequate time to commit to the review and evaluation of the residential provision.
- Enhance the residential pupils' independence and social skills by increasing their opportunities to plan, prepare and cook group meals regularly. In doing so, residential pupils can replicate what takes place at home.

## **Information about this inspection**

The school was contacted on the morning of day one by the lead inspector to announce the inspection. The inspection took place over two days, with feedback provided at the end of day two. During the course of the inspection, a number of activities took place. These included speaking with students, their parents, care staff and members of the senior management team including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the registered manager. A tour of the residential premises took place, and meals were eaten with the young people. Policies, risk assessments, recruitment records and young people's records were scrutinised.

## **Inspection team**

Linda Bond

lead social care inspector

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

The school is a local authority provision for boys who are subject to a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is located on the outskirts of Taunton. The boarding house is attached to the school and operates as a separate provision. Boarding is used flexibly to meet individual needs and can offer an extended school day for a small number of pupils. Pupils can board up to four weekday nights each week during term time. The school has 52 boys on roll, of whom eight are currently using the boarding facility.

## Inspection judgements

**The overall experiences and progress of children and young people**

**Good**

The residential pupils' outcomes are good. They benefit from a good quality of relationships with their peers and staff that is built upon honesty, trust and mutual respect. Observation of them during the course of the inspection confirmed that they enjoy one another's company and are tolerant of each other's different personalities. They clearly understand that they all have different needs. They engage in lively conversation with staff, and present as confident and relaxed in their environment.

As a result of their stays, the residential pupils are making good progress across all areas of their development. For example, one young person who had poor school attendance is now attending 100% of the time, his school reports indicate good progress and his parent reported that 'he loves going to school'. Analysis of school reports further strengthens the evidence that residential pupils do very well in school as a result of staying in the residential provision.

The residential pupils benefit from staying in a highly inclusive setting where their individuality is recognised, supported and celebrated. They access an extensive range of health services and therapies to help to support their emotional growth, and physical health and development. As a consequence, they have confidence in their own abilities and increased self-esteem, and are all in good health.

The behaviour of the residential pupils is very good. Through the empathetic and calm approach taken by staff, over time they have learned how to modify the ways in which they respond to different situations. As a result, physical interventions and sanctions are rarely used. Instead, the residential pupils respond positively to a good structure and routines. One parent commented on how their son is 'learning well because of the routines'.

Personalised and individualised care plans, which are regularly reviewed and updated, enable the manager and staff to understand the complexities of each residential pupil. As a result, staff approach the support of each residential pupil with skill, knowledge and understanding of their individual needs.

Residential pupils are at the heart of everything the school does. Their opinions and views are actively sought, and pupil questionnaires confirm that they feel happy, safe and fairly treated by the staff. Further to this, there is much evidence across the provision of how they are consulted and included in the vast array of activities they choose, for example swimming, hiking and visits to theme parks. House meetings are held regularly and are lively affairs at which pupils can organise activities, discuss issues and plan their weekends home. Observation of these meetings confirmed how the

residential pupils are empowered to take control and responsibility of decisions that impact on them.

The manager ensures that there are sufficient staff supporting the residential pupils, and the records scrutinised confirm this. However, a supplementary staff member at specific times of the day would enhance the residential pupils' opportunities to access more activities and have more choices. This addition would benefit the manager by releasing him from the very good direct work he undertakes with residential pupils, to allow him to monitor and review further the provision and its development.

### **The quality of care and support**

### **Outstanding**

The quality of care and support provided to residential pupils is outstanding. They receive exceptional support from a highly committed, dedicated staff team. Nothing is too much trouble for staff and they go out of their way to ensure that each residential pupil has everything they need to experience happy, safe and relaxed stays. An example is their ensuring that pupils have good-quality, warm bedding, personalised bedrooms, and toys and games that meet their individual needs.

The induction process for the residential pupils is particularly strong. The manager and staff recognise that this is sometimes a difficult time for family members, as well as the young person. They therefore take time with both of them to ensure that they familiarise themselves with the provision, and this includes a gradual, gentle introduction to staying overnight, at their own pace. This means that the young person is well prepared when transitioning to a residential pupil. Parents spoken to are positive and said that 'they [staff] are there for the parents as well'.

The residential pupils have access to a cohesive, experienced and qualified staff team that knows them very well. This means that they are able to talk, share worries and concerns with adults who understand. Scrutiny of a number of questionnaires that were provided confirm that residential pupils feel valued and listened to. Staff are passionate about their work. They said that they 'love their job' and are committed to making a difference. Their enthusiasm is infectious, and their observed warm, caring and sympathetic interactions with the residential pupils are to be applauded.

Staff listen to the residential pupils. They are genuinely interested in what they have to say and welcome their suggestions as to what they or the home can do differently. For example, pupils were keen to build a garden by which to remember a member of staff who died in an accident.

The staff team works collaboratively with the residential pupils to ensure that the living environment is homely and safe. Pupils are actively encouraged to take care of and have responsibility for their residential environment, which includes their bedroom. They all have their own bedroom and, where possible, an en suite bathroom. All residential pupils are treated with the utmost dignity and respect, and those who share washing facilities

do so safely, with their dignity and privacy maintained.

Residential pupils enjoy an extensive range of freshly prepared, nutritious meals and snacks provided by an external catering firm. Meal times are very much social occasions, with plenty of lively talk, and observations confirmed that residential pupils really enjoy them. There are also facilities and opportunities for residential pupils to make snacks and develop independent skills. However, further opportunities for them to be involved in the whole process of planning, shopping, preparing and cooking meals should be more routine. In doing so, the residential provision would be replicating a practice that takes place in the majority of homes. Parents and staff spoken to during the course of the inspection felt this would be a step in the right direction and would provide the residential pupils with a more 'realistic' view of meal times.

Care plans and school reports are of the highest quality, and allow the uniqueness and individuality of each residential pupil to shine. Records and risk assessments are up to date, and capture the personality and characteristics of each residential pupil. In particular, medical records are very well maintained. This ensures that all medication is safely administered and stored.

Parents are confident to call and speak with the staff and manager at any time. They spoke warmly of the manager, saying 'he's approachable and I can discuss anything with him, even difficulties I'm having at home'. Staff provide parents with regular updates on their son's progress and achievements.

Residential pupils know how to make a complaint and know it will be taken seriously. Records analysed during the course of the inspection indicate that there has been a small number of grumbles made, rather than complaints. The manager is swift to address and resolve these. For example, the portion size of meals was quickly increased following a statement made by a residential pupil.

#### **How well children and young people are protected**

**Outstanding**

Residential pupils' safety is held in the highest regard. This is because of the manager's and staff's excellent understanding of safeguarding procedures. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff are provided with knowledge that is informed by current research and that underpins daily practice, and regularly reports her findings and analysis to the governing board. The staff team is fully aware of the diverse needs and behaviours, of the young people and how these may affect their behaviour. Any concerns about a specific residential pupil are shared and referred promptly to the appropriate agency. In doing so, staff are able to proceed swiftly and to support individuals appropriately. The residential pupils' feedback is that they feel safe and have someone they can trust to talk to.

The manager displays an extensive range of child-friendly notices throughout the residential provision to support the residential pupils' safety. Information includes what a

residential pupil should do and whom they can speak to if they are concerned, worried or bullied. Records scrutinised indicate that bullying is not an issue in the provision. However, if bullying were to be identified, staff are equipped to support and monitor through training and expertise.

Residential pupils do not, presently, go missing. However, staff are very clear about the procedures to be implemented should this occur. The manager and staff use dynamic and progressive risk assessments to ensure that each residential pupil learns to take age- and ability-appropriate risks when making choices. This results in their safety being enshrined in everyday practice.

Positive behaviour is effectively and consistently promoted. Staff are highly trained and skilled in de-escalation techniques, which are implemented very well. Consequently, incidents of physical intervention are rare. Staff use their understanding, knowledge and common-sense approach to support the residential pupils' individual vulnerabilities. Sanctions are used appropriately but, again, remain rare and are replaced by rewards and praise. For example, residential pupils can earn points for good behaviour which they can convert to money to spend when shopping.

Residential pupils stay in a warm and homely environment where regular checks are made to ensure that it remains safe. They have access to IT equipment that enables them to complete educational studies and to access the internet for fun. The manager and designated safeguarding lead take very seriously the risks that are posed by use of the internet. They have ensured that all staff are trained and skilled in recognising these risks, that the system has appropriate filters and that the residential pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe.

Robust vetting and monitoring procedures for all staff ensure that residential pupils are kept safe. Visitors sign in and are carefully monitored on the premises.

Discussion with external agencies during the course of the inspection confirmed that the safeguarding of the residential pupils is excellent and that they have no concerns.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Good**

The leadership and management of the residential provision is good. It is led by a highly committed and qualified manager. He works in partnership with the head teacher to improve the experiences of the residential pupils continually. His enthusiasm filters through to all staff and inspires them to do their utmost to support the residential pupils. As a result, staff are passionate about their role. They work collaboratively with parents, other agencies and governors to ensure that the highest standard of care is maintained. Parents spoken with said 'staff are brilliant' and that the manager is very 'approachable' and 'organised'.

The governing body invests highly in the residential provision and has a visible presence



here. The parent link governor visits regularly to meet with staff and the residential pupils. Her relationship with the senior management team is very positive. This means that she is confident to challenge any proposals they make, and together they are constantly looking at ways to improve the outcomes of the residential pupils.

The core staff team is small, but together the members work extremely effectively, and are intrinsic to the delivery of the exceptional care and support to the residential pupils. As a result, the residential pupils benefit from the diverse skills and individual interests that the staff team brings to the role. This means that they are inspired to take part, become involved in and to have a go, for example at cycling, swimming, football and walking in the country.

Overall, the monitoring, reviewing and analysis of the residential provision is very good. However, it was noted during the course of the inspection that the manager mostly works directly with the residential pupils. Staff report that 'he's always on the floor and available to us, I've never seen him in the office, he sits where the residential pupils and staff can access him.' While this is noteworthy, to enable the manager to enhance the monitoring and the development of the residential provision it would be necessary for a supplementary staff member to be made available.

## 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 exceed the standard of good and result 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123939
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038758
<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/7006

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>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	50
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	10 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Richard Berry
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	27 January 2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01823 275569
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