

# Cuckmere House School

Cuckmere House School, Eastbourne Road, SEAFORD, East Sussex, BN25 4BA

## Inspection dates

12 January 2016 to 14 January 2016

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

**Outstanding** **1**

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

Outstanding 1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- The residential provision provides exceptional opportunities that complement the work in the school day. Data gathered by the school records improvements in academic attainment and attendance.
- Exceptionally committed staff invest time in pupils, promote their welfare and celebrate achievements. As a result, they develop extremely highly valued relationships with staff.
- Leadership and management of the residential provision is strong. They continually strive to develop the provision to improve pupils' outcomes.
- The quality of care provided is excellent. Pupils benefit from the residential experience. They learn new skills such as managing their own behaviour.
- Effective provision of health services ensures that the pupils' emotional and physical well-being is promoted and any difficulties can be responded to on-site.
- Residential pupils are safe. Staff allow them to develop independence whilst fully safeguarding them. The excellent presentation of pupils reflect their choice to take part in residential life.

### 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?

Pupils' views after a positive handling incident are recorded. However, these should be added to the positive handling incident book for auditing.

The admissions policy and statement of purpose for the residential policy needs to be consistent. This is in relation to the amount of nights a week pupils can stay at the provision.

## **Information about this inspection**

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of residential practice over two evenings; formal and informal discussion with a range of students who stay at the residential home or attend for the extended day. Residential accommodation was inspected. Meetings took place with the Executive Head, Head of Care, Head of School, Chair of Trustees, governors with lead responsibility for safeguarding and a number of residential care staff. Telephone calls were made to obtain comments from parents and carers as insufficient responses to Parent Review were registered. A telephone call to a Social Worker was made to obtain feedback. A wide range of documents were scrutinised.

## **Inspection team**

Suzy Lemmy

Lead social care inspector

## **Full Report**

### **Information about this school**

This residential special school is for boys aged between five and 16 years who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) for Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) or an educational statement for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The school is an academy. It is part of a Multi academy Trust, which is a collaboration/formal partnership that includes one other residential SEMH special school, a day SEMH special school and a range of alternative provision. The school's residential provision is located in a separate building in a residential area of the town, approximately half a mile from the main school site. Up to 10 boys can stay overnight and they generally stay between one and two nights during the school week. Extended day provision is also provided for both primary and secondary pupils, enabling them to stay into the evening for activities and a meal before returning home.

## Inspection Judgements

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

**Outstanding**

Pupils make exceptional progress in the residential provision. Staff set achievable but stretching targets, they monitor and analyse pupil's outcomes. This ensures targets reflect the Educational, Health and Care plans and remain purposeful. Pupils identify their own targets; displayed in the form of a ladder, when they get to the top they receive a small financial reward. They achieve 80 percent of their targets reflecting that they are realistic and challenging. This display includes motivational messages to help them on their journey. Pupils develop a sense of personal pride, which increases their self-esteem.

Pupils and parents speak highly of their experience at the residential provision. One pupil said 'it's like a family; the staff have done so much for me'. Another said 'how can you change something this good?' A parent said 'before my child stayed he was unable to go out to the shops, as a result of the things he does whilst at the home we can now take him out more, he is more confident'. This young person could not manage loud, busy environments prior to attending the provision, as a result of the slow introduction to increased social opportunities

School staff work in conjunction with residential staff to ensure consistency across both settings. An initiative whereby staff key work pupils who are in the same school tutor group is effective. Residential staff and school staff liaise to ensure that they are working towards the same goals. Residential staff attend their pupils' tutor group every Friday and speak daily to share information and reflect on the pupils' progress. Staff said 'I am linked to my key children's tutor groups so that I know what they are doing at school and we can work together, this works really well'. Staff and pupils reflect on pupil's achievements at the end of the school day, they chose a favoured activity as a reward.

The pupils' behaviour is excellent. Staff recognise positive achievements in relation to social skills and self-regulation, which promotes good behaviour. There is a markedly reduced amount of positive handling incidents while at the residential provision, there has been only one incident during the inspection period. One residential pupil said 'there is no reason for us to be held at the residential home, we love going'. Consequences are set as a last resort and include missing a stay for a week; pupils choose to attend so this is an effective deterrent.

Listening to the pupils' voices is a strength of the provision. Staff make considerable efforts to seek their views and act upon them. Pupils can use a variety of methods including the school council, Student Voice, where pupils talk to a named member of staff who will advocate on their behalf, and a suggestions book. Pupils' report that staff respond to their requests. For example, one pupil said 'that is why you ate that meal yesterday, I picked that'. Another pupil said 'that's how we got the new television in the lounge'. This increases their sense of belonging and ownership of the provision.

Pupils can stay at the residential provision for one or two nights a week. They initially attend as part of the extended school day, progressing to overnight stays at their request. The service is flexible; Managers respond to pupil requests to increase the number of overnight stays. One pupil said 'I stayed overnight, chose to go back to extended day, then again to staying overnight again'. Other pupils told the inspector that they attend the provision because it is an opportunity to do activities they are not able to do at home, for example, tennis, rugby, roller skating and ice skating . Pupils value the service immensely.

Pupils' mental and physical welfare are paramount. They access pastoral and health care services at the school. The school nurse offers a regular drop-in session. The pupils demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of this service. One young person was presenting as lethargic and pale, an assessment was completed to look at his diet, sleeping habits, energy level as well as blood tests to rule out any health issues. A clinical psychologist, employed by the local child and adolescent mental health team, also visits the school one day a week; young people are referred to this service for assessment and long term targeted interventions. The accessibility of these services means that there is a quick response to pupils' physical or emotional difficulties. This ensures that any emotional difficulties that affect the pupils education are dealt with quickly. Pupils discussed how they use the school nurse to talk to if they have any worries about their health, including sexual health.

Staff promote pupils' vocational skills and prepare them for independence. Some pupils attend a sport leadership course at the school. They overcome social communication difficulties to be able to teach younger pupils. One pupil who was previously very shy has increased in self-confidence as a result. Staff help pupils to prepare for when they leave the school. A pupil said 'I have an interview for a college course tomorrow; the staff have helped me to apply for college and prepare for the interview'.

Managers and staff are attuned to pupils' and prioritise their welfare. They continually reflecting on and celebrating pupil's achievements. Pupils respond by being immensely proud of their progress and striving to succeed.

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

## **Outstanding**

Pupils enjoy a range of outdoor activities including adventurous pursuits, for example, mountain bikes were purchased so that staff and pupils can go mountain bike riding. Staff are fully trained enabling pupils to experience these pursuits safely. Pupils report that they spend much of their time on electronic devices using social media or playing games when not at the residential home. They enjoy attending, one pupil said 'it's great here, you get to do lots of things you wouldn't do usually'. They are able to socialise with their peers outside of school and learn from each other. One pupil explained how his friend acted as a positive role model, 'he spoke to me about how much the staff do for us and that helped me to calm down'.

Pupils who access the residential experience as part of the extended day report that they

enjoy a range of activities, including football, cooking, table tennis, bonfires and playing pool. Initiatives like 'kindness week' where they invited a teacher to the home and showed kindness and respect promotes social skills. One pupil said 'I look forward to going'. The extended day allows young people to have the opportunity to experience the residential provision first hand. This prepares them for a smooth transition if they chose to attend.

Staff cook meals ensuring that they are varied, healthy and specific dietary needs are catered for. They seek the views of pupils about the menu, pupils take turns to be 'head chef' and are rewarded additional points for their culinary skills. Staff and young people sit together, talk about their day and plan activities for the evening. The atmosphere was fun, with plenty of laughter and discussion. All pupils complete chores, giving them a sense of shared responsibility and new life skills.

Staff promote enjoyment and progress in the home. They celebrate pupils' progress by compiling photographic records of their time, which is presented to them when they leave school. Residential pupils competed to design the school logo. Staff and pupils produce a newsletter to promote the residential provision within the school community.

Accommodation is of a high standard. The environment is homely with a warm and vibrant atmosphere. Pupils are proud to show others around the school and residential provision. They personalise their rooms and take care of the house.

Staff build positive relationships with parents. They inform parents immediately if there is an incident and after each stay. Individual care plans include feedback to parents. One parent said 'we have nothing but praise for what they do'. Responses from parental questionnaires include 'the home has helped my child progress so much, I would highly recommend it' and 'all staff work hard and work with parents well'. Parents report that young people have gained new skills, grown in confidence and have made impressive progress directly as a result of attending the provision.

Staff celebrate diversity by displaying different festivals and information about cultures in the dining area. A colourful, informative wall chart marking monthly cultural events is displayed around the room. Staff and pupils have designed a board with current affairs to stimulate conversation at meal times. Pupils proudly discussed the latest topic showing their own contributions. Pupils' opportunities to understand the experiences of those in the community include a talk by a holocaust survivor and visits to war memorials.

Staff in the residential setting ensure all routines, activities and discussions with pupils are focused on pupils' personal development in all aspects of their lives.

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

## **Outstanding**

Pupils are very safe in this school. Designated safeguarding leads are suitably trained. Policies and procedures are updated annually. Staff have all recently had PREVENT training delivered by the local authority. The school has good links with the local safeguarding children's board, who deliver training to a high standard. Staff demonstrate

excellent knowledge of child protection, responses to allegations against staff and whistle blowing. Safeguarding is a permanent agenda item in supervision and team meetings, ensuring that the importance of emerging issues as well as safeguarding concerns are shared.

Staff deal with issues of concern effectively, for example, one young person presented with mental health difficulties. Staff referred him to the child protection lead and, with the consent of his parents, he was seen immediately by the on-site clinical psychologist for assessment and intervention. Pupils' welfare is understood to be the responsibility of all staff; daily logs include a section to record 'areas of concern'. These records and concerns are shared with the head of care to ensure appropriate referrals are made quickly. All staff demonstrate that the young people's welfare and safety is paramount. They use recording effectively methods to safeguard pupils.

Pupils rarely go missing because they choose to use the service. On one occasion when a pupil did leave, staff followed procedures and stayed with him until his parent collected him. Clear policies and procedures are in place ensuring that staff know what to do and act promptly. The head of care has developed a new form to record missing from home episodes in more detail. This will allow better scrutiny of incidents.

Staff complete a 'circle of support' with each pupil so that they can identify their support networks within the school and residential provision. Young people report that they have identified staff they can talk to but all staff make time for them. One pupil said 'you can go to all the staff, they are all wise'. Staff were observed discussing complaint procedures with a pupil during his induction to the residential provision. Staff promote children's rights and are clear to pupils that their views are important to them.

There is a strong anti-bullying culture in the school and residential provision. The relevant policy is a stand-alone policy that is reviewed annually and reflects the ethos of the provision. An anti-bullying week initiative is promoted by the school; however, when this was discussed with the young people they replied 'it is anti-bullying week every day at this school'. Managers recognise that bullying happens and are alert to the problem, they respond to incidents immediately and effectively. Preventative steps taken when considering the match of young people at the residential provision are effective. One young person explained 'I can't go on the same day as [pupil's name] because we fight'.

There is an excellent approach to e-safety. There are systems in place to manage risks without becoming risk averse. Staff are well trained in cyber bullying and e-safety. Pupils are unable to use Wi-Fi on school computers to prevent them from accessing unsuitable sites. Staff allow young people to use their mobile phones and educate them to use these safely. The relationship with staff is such that pupils trust them and will tell them if they are worried about any communications.

Positive handling interventions are rare because effective de-escalation techniques are used. Staff encourage young people to learn to self-regulate, one young person stated that 'I am learning to go to my room to calm down now'. Since the last inspection there has been one occasion when positive handling was used. This was in line with regulations; the young person's views were sought but were not recorded appropriately.

External agencies report a high level of effective safeguarding. A Social Worker reported

that 'staff pass on any concerns to me; they work really well with us to ensure his safety and that of others'. The head of care consults effectively with the local authority designated officer. She has forged a close relationship, which includes seeking advice, consultations and referrals. Governors stated 'safeguarding is a priority' when monitoring and evaluating the service, records evidence that the pupils safety remains in the forefront of Governor discussions. They are clear about their responsibilities to challenge the Executive Head.

Risk assessments, completed termly, inform staff about how to minimise risks. Pupils write their own risk assessments under staff guidance. This increases their sense of responsibility for their actions. Pupils' trust staff, they report that they can tell staff about any issues that are concerning them. One pupil said 'staff will always find time to talk to you' and another pupil said 'staff care about you'. This reduces the need for risk taking.

The health and safety of pupils is robustly managed resulting in an environment where the welfare of all is taken seriously. Fire safety systems are checked on a regular basis, including servicing of fire-fighting equipment, testing of alarms and the undertaking of evacuation drills. Staff were observed discussing fire evacuation procedures with a pupil during his induction, this was promoted in a fun way enabling the pupil to fully engage with the safety information.

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

#### **Outstanding**

The head of care is a strong leader who inspires the staff group to provide a consistently high standard of care. Clear lines of responsibility are in place, the head of school and the governing body are committed to supporting the continued development and progress of pupils. The head of care is suitably experienced for the job. She holds the Registered Managers Award for Children and Young People Level Five. She has previously successfully lead an outstanding provision and continually develops the service.

Strong and effective leadership ensures that the pupils' needs remain the focus of practice. The aims and objectives of the residential provision are clearly described in the statement of purpose; however, the information on the number of days that pupils can stay is not the same in the admissions policy and the statement of need.

Despite the relatively small number of pupils accessing the residential provision, its importance and value is promoted within the school. Clear communication exists across the school and residential provision, which results in a cohesive approach in meeting the needs of the pupils. This ensures that any issues that arise either in the school day, during the extended day or residential provision time are shared consistently amongst all staff. A youth worker has been recruited to work in the school and the residential placement. This new initiative is increasing the integration of both settings.

A small, stable and pro-active staff group cares for the pupils. They are skilled in managing pupils challenging behaviour in a firm but fair way. A permanent, stable staff team care for pupils. This creates a family atmosphere whereby staff, who know them well, look after pupils. New staff receive a suitable induction and training to ensure that they have the necessary skills. Staff report excellent support from managers and their



colleagues. Communication between staff was observed to be effective, ensuring close supervision and interaction with all pupils.

High quality supervision and staff appraisals underpin the work of the home. Staff report that 'supervision is reflective, we focus on the young people and personal development, we are well supported'. Staff are fully committed to providing an outstanding provision for young people. Weekly team meetings, attended by all residential staff, keep them up to date on developments in pupils learning, current goals and targets. Staff have access to varied training both with the school programme and from external providers. Training and developmental needs are identified through annual appraisals.

Staff have cultivated strong relationships with parents and carers, education staff, social workers and health professionals to provide a holistic and consistent approach to care. A Social Worker reported that the residential provision offers carers respite in a normalising, positive way, 'my young person chooses to attend the home with his friends, which gives his carers a break'. The clinical psychologist reported that 'the school is very successful with the pupils, communication is good with all staff'.

Managers and those responsible for the school ensure the high standards of care are monitored. The head of care monitors behaviour management, consequences and log sheets and is well aware of day-to-day events. Monitoring visits by a governor takes place in line with regulations with subsequent reports providing useful feedback regarding standards of care.

The head of care uses internal and external audits to improve practice. Continual improvement is the driver for managers who strive to demonstrate exceptional care. They make use of research to inform their practice, for example, when developing a spreadsheet to devise targets for the young people to work to they sought the advice of an educational psychologist. The head of care attends conferences to ensure that she can inform staff in regards to up to date research. A working party is tasked with overseeing and continually improving the provision. The school development plan highlights areas of improvement to enhance their aspirations for the residential provision.

## 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**

**Social care unique reference number**

SC050165

**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**

63

**Gender of boarders**

Boys

**Age range of boarders**

6 to16

**Headteacher**

Executive Headteacher - Frank Stanford

Head of School – Lorraine Myles

**Date of previous boarding inspection**

19/03/2015

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