

Sunnydown School

Sunnydown School, Whyteleafe Road, CATERHAM, Surrey, CR3 5ED

Inspection dates	12/01/2016 to 14/01/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Requires improvement	3
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Strong leadership and management ensure there is a robust approach to addressing poor staff performance. An open and transparent management approach enables staff to develop the confidence to report poor practice.
- Young people make substantial progress in terms of their academic achievement and social development. They develop positive relationships with staff and build excellent peer relationships. This results in improved self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The residential provision is an integral part of the school, and provides pupils with the opportunity to achieve stability and consistency in their lives. They develop age-appropriate independence skills and become more emotionally resilient.
- A good standard of care is delivered by a stable, committed team of staff who understand the individual needs of young people. Staff have high aspirations for young people and support them to achieve well.
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted. Young people enjoy a well-balanced diet and have many opportunities to take exercise. A proactive approach is taken to supporting young people's psychological well-being.
- Young people are given the advice and guidance they need to keep themselves safe on the internet and from the risks associated with social media websites. Training ensures staff are familiar with the potential risks young people face in relation to being exposed to extremist views.

- Leaders, managers and care staff communicate effectively with parents and carers and keep them well informed of young people's progress. Parents express high levels of confidence in the care provided in the residential facility.
- Well-established systems ensure the progress made by young people is effectively monitored.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

11.1 The school ensures that:

Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school, and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that care staff use all available information to assess child protection concerns and associated risks.
- Ensure that concerns for a child's safety are reported to the relevant authorities.
- Ensure that the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is notified when concerns about an adult's practice have been substantiated.
- Make arrangements for governors to make occasional visits to boarders in the residential facility.
- Ensure recruitment procedures account for any gaps in an employee's career history.
- Implement a process for identifying pupils who use feedback questionnaires to indicate they may be at risk of harm.
- Ensure that boarding managers receive supervision and feedback on their performance.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: formal and informal discussions with residential pupils, including an arranged meeting with a group of pupils, and joining pupils for meals'; discussions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, care managers, speech and language therapists, other members of the senior management team and members of care staff; interview of one governor and a meeting with the independent visitor; discussion with three parents; scrutiny of a wide range of documentation concerning the residential provision; and a review of feedback on 'Parent View'.

Inspection team

Stephen Collett
Teri Peck

Lead social care inspector
Regional inspection manager

Full Report

Information about this school

This is a residential and day school operated by the local authority. It caters for boys aged 11 to 16 years, who have an emotional or learning difficulty. It currently has 86 pupils, of whom 35 are boarders who reside up to four nights a week. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and a number have social communication disorders, such as Asperger's Syndrome. The boarding accommodation is separated into two areas: the juniors reside in the main school building; and seniors occupy the first floor of a teaching block. The school is situated in a residential area in Caterham. It was last inspected in January 2015.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people make substantial progress in terms of their academic achievement and personal development. There are effective systems in place to ensure progress is monitored. Consequently, the school is able to demonstrate how pupils benefit from accessing the residential facility. In the last academic year, 67% of full-time residential pupils achieved, as a minimum, their expected progress in English, and 50% of full- and part-time residential pupils made above expected progress in maths. Residential care staff encourage and support young people to achieve well academically. Older pupils may access a homework club, via the residential facility, which helps them prepare for examinations.

Consistent and effective behaviour management strategies, which reflect those used in school, are implemented in the residential facility. This ensures residential pupils live in a calm environment, where they are able to take full advantage of the opportunities this experience presents. Young people develop an increased level of stability and security, and this leads to a decrease in negative behaviours. Recent analysis, undertaken by the leadership team, demonstrates there is an average of 2.8 incidents of negative behaviour per week from residential pupils, compared to 28 per week from pupils who do not access the residential facility.

Parents and carers consistently express a positive view of the residential facility. They are confident that care staff have the necessary skills and abilities to promote the young people's welfare and to keep them safe, and give many examples of how their children's social skills have developed. One parent said her son had learnt how to 'empathise' with others, and another said, 'He is far more resilient and copes better with change'.

Residential pupils report that they enjoy the experience and are able to reflect on the progress they have made. One pupil stated, 'I am now more independent', and another said, 'I used to make other people upset, but I have changed the way I behave'. Residential pupils were observed to have positive relationships with care and teaching staff, and demonstrated caring, supportive relationships with each other.

A relatively new management structure is in place. The new leadership team identified some weaknesses, particularly related to managing staff performance and the recording and administration of medication. These matters have been effectively tackled under the strong

leadership of the head teacher. A new management structure has been put in place to ensure the matters identified are addressed robustly going forward. The residential provision is now well organised. Leaders, managers and care staff have a good understanding of the needs of young people, and meeting these is prioritised within the residential facility. Some shortfalls relating to the protection of young people were identified, but these are not widespread and no young people have come to harm as a result. Leaders and managers demonstrated a commitment to addressing these issues and working in partnership with relevant external agencies.

There are excellent opportunities for young people to engage in a wide range of activities. A young person said, 'It's really fun here.' Young people feel part of a supportive community where they can grow and develop. They are encouraged to express their views on how the residential facility cares for them, and were able to identify a number of people they could talk to if they were unhappy. These include peer youth representatives, their keyworker, teacher or the safeguarding officer. Residential pupils enjoy positive day-to-day experiences and this enhances their chances of making good academic progress and personal development.

The quality of care and support

Good

Staff provide young people with consistently good levels of care. They are familiar with their individual needs and are sensitive to each young person's likes and dislikes. In one case, the managers have not familiarised themselves with information pertaining to a young person's vulnerabilities outside of the school and the needs arising from this. However, this is not indicative of the overall standard of care being delivered.

Young people who are new to the residential provision are provided with information in advance, and have opportunities to visit the accommodation and ask questions. Staff were observed listening and answering young people's questions fully during the induction process. They adopt a nurturing approach, and offer young people reassurances when they display any anxieties about being away from home.

Young people feel they are well cared for, and say they are treated fairly by staff. They will discuss any concerns they may have with their keyworker, and are provided with plenty of opportunities to express their views on the care they receive, through completing questionnaires or attending the 'boarders' forum' meetings. This ensures the young people feel valued and respected, and increases their self-esteem. A parent commented that since her son became a residential pupil he is 'happy, confident and has much better social skills'.

The residential accommodation is comfortable, spacious and welcoming. Some of the communal areas in the older pupils' accommodation require updating and are in need of redecoration. This has been identified by leaders and managers as an area for improvement, and included in development plans. Young people are able to personalise bedrooms and their own sleeping area. Suitable arrangements are made for ensuring young people's personal possessions are kept safe.

Care planning focuses on the individual needs of young people, and recognises their strengths and areas for development. Their residential care plans take into account their progress in the teaching environment, so that consistency is maintained when setting goals and targets. Young people are fully engaged in the planning process, and this provides them with a sense of owning their plan. Progress is monitored against the agreed targets, and achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Healthcare planning and arrangements are appropriate and parents and carers are consulted on how these should be implemented. Following the last inspection, leaders and managers became aware of poor practice in relation to the recording and administration of medication. Robust

action has been taken to address these issues, and an external audit of practice was subsequently undertaken to ensure arrangements are safe. No young people came to any harm as a result of these shortfalls.

The headteacher takes a proactive approach to ensuring young people's emotional and psychological needs are met. Approaches have been made to external specialist organisations, so that young people can access appropriate counselling when needed. A new provider has recently begun delivering speech and language therapy, and is currently planning how therapists can work effectively with residential pupils and staff.

Young people access a range of recreational and leisure pursuits within the school and local community. One young person stated, 'There is so many activities.' Many of these provide young people with opportunities to take exercise and keep fit. Some young people take advantage of the opportunity to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, and learn independence skills which increase their levels of self-confidence.

High-quality catering arrangements ensure young people receive a well-balanced diet. Some young people stated they prefer previous menu choices to those currently available. The headteacher explained that this is because more nutritional foods have recently been introduced, and young people are still adjusting and becoming familiar with the dishes now provided. Catering staff are familiar with any specific dietary requirements young people may have, and ensure these are met. A high standard of food hygiene and cleanliness is maintained throughout the catering facilities.

Young people are supported to contact their parents and carers, and do so on a regular basis. Staff provide parents and carers with weekly updates on young people's progress, and respond quickly to any enquiries made. This ensures positive working relationships are maintained, and gives parents and carers the confidence to ask for advice, when needed, on such things as managing the young person's behaviour at home.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

The headteacher, senior staff and care workers are seeking to ensure that the safety and protection of young people is central to their practice. There are five designated lead persons for child protection, who share responsibilities for keeping young people safe. They have received appropriate training to undertake this role.

Some shortfalls in practice were identified at this inspection, mainly in relation to one particular case. No young people have been harmed as a result of these. The majority of young people say that they feel safe and have the confidence to speak to care staff if they have any concerns. Young people are given the opportunity to express their views on the quality of care they receive in several ways, including questionnaires. One young person used this mechanism to report feeling unsafe. There is currently no process for bringing this to the attention of the safeguarding leads and, consequently, no action has been taken to ensure the young person is not coming to harm.

Care managers and staff have not always ensured they are familiar with the available information pertaining to the known risks associated with individual young people. This includes reasons why social care services have previously been involved with the young person and their family. Thus, they do not effectively assess the potential for young people to be harmed, and when new information comes to light they sometimes fail to see the relevance this may have.

Although records are kept of young people's identified needs and vulnerabilities, these are not always used to plan effectively young people's care. For example, troubling behaviour, such as expressing thoughts of self-harm, is not taken into account when decisions are made about sharing bedrooms.

Information provided by young people and parents, which indicates that the young person might be at risk of harm, has not always been shared with the local authority. In one case, this was despite the local authority making enquiries into the well-being of a particular young person. These shortfalls were brought to the attention of the headteacher during the inspection, and prompt action was taken to ensure that the information was shared with the relevant professionals.

Other aspects of child protection practice are more robust. Allegations made against staff are thoroughly investigated, and steps are taken to ensure young people are kept safe and supported during the process. The headteacher has taken a proactive approach to ensuring staff are empowered to report poor practice. Consequently, staff now have the confidence to share their concerns, and they feel reassured that they will be acted upon. When concerns about staff practice have been substantiated, notifications to the DBS have not been made in a timely manner.

No young people have gone missing from the residential facility. However, managers and staff are aware of the potential for this to happen, and have therefore familiarised themselves with local protocols for reporting missing children. These protocols are reflected in the school procedures for reporting missing children, which provide staff with clear guidance on how to respond if an incident does occur.

Young people benefit from receiving advice and guidance on how to keep themselves safe. They are familiar with the risks associated with the internet and accessing social media sites. Young people are able to reflect on why rules are in place to restrict access to some sites, and they respect these. Posters and leaflets around the school signpost young people to where they can get further support and advice if they are experiencing problems associated with the internet.

Behaviour-management strategies are well established and embedded in practice throughout the school and residential facility. During the inspection, inspectors observed immaculate behaviour from the young people at all times. Staff maintain consistent boundaries, and use creative approaches to incentivise good behaviour. These approaches are monitored and regularly evaluated for effectiveness. There have been no physical restraints of young people in the residential facility since the last inspection.

Staff receive appropriate training in relation to safeguarding young people from harm. They are familiar with the risks associated with child sexual exploitation, and recent training has heightened their awareness of the potential for young people to become influenced by extremist views. The headteacher networks widely, and has established good contacts with other professionals focused on child protection. He is therefore familiar with best practice developments and seeks to disseminate these among staff.

Good recruitment procedures are deployed which prevent unsuitable adults being employed at the school, and these are largely effective. However, one shortfall was identified in the process. In an isolated case, a member of staff was employed without a thorough exploration of gaps in their employment history being undertaken.

A new management structure has been implemented in the residential facility following the departure of an established head of care. Two managers now share responsibility for the provision, with one focusing on strategic development and the other on day-to-day operational functions. Both managers are experienced in delivering residential care for young people at the school, but have not previously had managerial responsibility. They both are currently studying for the level 5 Diploma in Residential Childcare Management.

The managers lead an established, committed and consistent staff team, which is focused on meeting the needs of young people and providing a welcoming and nurturing environment. Leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of the needs of the young people, and demonstrate high aspirations for them as individuals and also for the continuous improvement of the residential facility.

During this transitional period, the headteacher has demonstrated exceptional commitment to ensuring that the residential facility is effectively managed and high-quality care provided. An investigation into professional misconduct by care staff has been well managed, and lessons have been learned. Consequently, staff feel that there is now a more open and transparent senior management approach, and this will ensure that poor practice is investigated and addressed promptly in future. Similarly, the chair of the governing body expresses confidence in the headteacher's ability to drive forward continuous improvement.

The two new care managers feel well supported by the senior management team, and have clearly defined priorities for developing the residential provision. However, this support has not yet included formal supervision. Care staff do receive supervision and regular appraisal, which allows them to reflect on their practice and identify areas for professional development.

Effective systems for monitoring the quality of care identify any weaknesses and areas for improvement. An independent visitor undertakes regular monitoring visits, and provides good quality reports on the findings. The headteacher has recently introduced a more robust system for responding to any issues identified in the reports. The residential manager with strategic responsibility responds to, and implements improvements as necessary, for matters raised. An internal self-evaluation of the residential facility and an external audit of safeguarding provision allows for further scrutiny of the services delivered.

The governing body reviews all monitoring reports, ensuring that it is familiar with any issues that cause concern. One governor has specific responsibility for overseeing the residential provision, and communicates effectively with the headteacher. This governor has identified the need to develop more effective communication channels between teaching and care staff, to ensure information is shared appropriately. Although governors have a strong presence in the school, they have not recently undertaken visits to the residential facility during the evening, when the boys are present.

Care staff have access to a range of training opportunities which prepare them well for their role. This ensures they have the necessary skills and knowledge to care effectively for the young people and meet their needs. Staff further benefit from discussing the learning from training courses in their team meetings, and this helps ensure this is implemented in practice. New members of staff complete a thorough induction process. One member of staff commented that the guidance she had received on developing positive relationships with the pupils had been 'particularly helpful'.

Staff work collaboratively, and demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm, energy and commitment to ensuring the welfare of young people. They reflect on their practice and their professional development needs. Staff value the support and leadership provided by the headteacher. There is a consistent approach to caring for young people across the school, which will be further

enhanced by the implementation of the governors' proposal to develop improved communication channels between teaching and care staff.

Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect best practice and changing legislation. Examples include the need to protect young people from becoming exposed to extremist views being incorporated into relevant policies, and the whistle-blowing policy being evaluated for effectiveness.

Leaders and managers promote partnership working with external agencies, and ensure that positive working relationships with parents are maintained. A parent commented that the recent changes to the management structure of the residential provision have been a 'smooth transition', and another added that leaders and managers are 'constantly innovating and finding new ways to enhance the boarding experience'.

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	125458
Social care unique reference number	SC013896
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	35
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to16
Headteacher	Paul Jensen
Date of previous boarding inspection	14 January 2015
Telephone number	01883 342281
Email address	Pjensen@sunnydown.surrey.sch.uk

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