

Sunnydown School

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

Inspection dates

21 June to 22 June 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

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- The residential provision is exceptionally well led and managed. All managers are supported to become leaders, and there is a shared commitment to continuous improvement. Staff are motivated to provide high standards of care.
- Innovative assessment and monitoring systems ensure that the needs of young people are clearly identified. Effective support strategies are implemented in practice. Consequently, young people make excellent progress across all aspects of their lives.
- Practice is informed by research, and creative approaches are used to support and care for young people. Practice is specifically tailored to those who have social communication disorders.
- Highly effective behaviour management strategies support young people to cope more effectively with their anxieties and frustrations. This ensures that a calm and relaxed atmosphere prevails in the residential accommodation.
- Young people develop their social skills and build positive relationships with their peers and care staff. As a result, they become less isolated and begin to engage more in community-based activities and social events.
- There is a strong culture of learning from external monitoring of the residential provision and from any serious events that have occurred. This approach has ensured significant improvements in safeguarding and child protection practice within a short time frame.

- Becoming a residential pupil is a positive experience. Young people engage enthusiastically in a range of activities and learn new skills, such as how to keep safe in their communities. Their achievements are recognised and celebrated, and this builds self-esteem.
- The culture and ethos of the school ensure that young people feel valued and listened to. There are excellent opportunities for young people to make their views known and to influence the day-to-day routine in the residential accommodation.
- Leaders and managers network with a broad range of external professionals. This enhances the prospects of young people accessing specialist support when required, and raises awareness of the needs and vulnerabilities of those with social communication disorders.
- Minor shortfalls were identified in respect of ensuring young people's privacy needs are consistently met, and reviewing night-time security arrangements.

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 that residential pupils' need for privacy is respected when they are showering and changing.
- Review the arrangements for overnight security. This relates to access to the residential accommodation, and monitoring residential pupils' movements during the night.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with two 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, learning mentor, special educational needs coordinator, other members of the senior management team and members of care staff, interviews with two governors and a telephone discussion with the independent visitor, discussion with two parents, scrutiny of a wide range of documentation concerning the residential provision and a review of feedback on 'Parent View'.

Inspection team

Stephen Collett	Lead social care inspector
-----------------	----------------------------

Teri Peck	Regulatory inspection manager
-----------	-------------------------------

Full report

Information about this school

This is a residential and day school for boys aged 11 to 16 years, who have communication and interaction needs (CoIN) such as Asperger's, often with associated emotional or learning difficulties. The school is fully maintained by the local authority and currently has 85 pupils, of whom 34 are boarders who reside up to four nights a week. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, or an Education Health Care Plan, 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 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The residential provision is exceptionally well organised and efficiently managed. It provides a nurturing environment for vulnerable young people, where they learn to respect one another, develop friendships and build positive relationships with care staff. The calm and relaxed atmosphere means that young people quickly adapt to their surroundings and develop a sense of stability and security. They feel valued and well cared for. This enhances young people's ability to make the most of the opportunities provided by the school, and they make excellent progress across all aspects of their lives.

Residential pupils are supported to achieve well and to make good academic progress. Time is allocated in the evening for them to complete homework, with the support and encouragement of residential care staff. This has positive results. For example, in the current academic year, 75% of Year 8 full-time residential pupils have made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. 100% of full-time residential pupils have made at least expected progress in science. All but two of the residential pupils who left the school in June 2015 obtained places on their chosen further education courses. The school has been recognised by The Minister Of State for the academic progress that young people make, taking into account their starting points when they entered the school.

An innovative integrated system has been introduced to assess young people's educational, social and emotional needs. This enables leaders and managers to monitor the progress that young people make in relation to their overall well-being. Over time, residential pupils gain more confidence in social situations and begin to build lasting friendships. One parent commented, 'He has quickly realised that boys at school can be his friends.' For many residential pupils who have previously experienced a sense of isolation, this is significant progress.

This progress can be attributed to good initial assessment of young people's needs, which results in clear support strategies being implemented. One young person was observed in a social situation, making a sustained effort to follow the guidance and to meet the targets set out in his care plan. Pupils who are not making anticipated progress are quickly identified, and additional support is made available. A recent addition to the support network is the learning mentor role. One-to-one support is given to pupils to help to identify the barriers to their engaging positively. This often involves partnership working with parents and carers, and other professionals involved with the young person.

Residential pupils take advantage of the excellent opportunities that they have to develop age-appropriate independence skills, through a 'fit4life' programme. This programme is in the process of becoming an accredited qualification. Young people learn a range of different skills, and a record is kept of their progress. One young person stated, 'I really like learning grown-up skills,' demonstrating pride in his achievements.

Strong leadership and management ensure that any weaknesses in the residential provision are addressed in a timely manner. Thorough and decisive action was taken following the last inspection, when shortfalls were identified in the arrangements for

protecting young people. External auditing and monitoring of the quality of care are seen as an opportunity for further improvement. Listening to the views of young people is seen as an integral part of maintaining high standards. Residential pupils voice their opinions and make suggestions through a boarders' forum. Minutes from these meetings indicate that all views are given consideration and responded to by care staff. The pupils have access to an independent advocate and they are regularly reminded of how they can contact this service.

Leaders and managers work effectively with a range of external agencies, to promote the welfare of individual young people and to raise awareness of their needs. This includes consultation with child and adolescent mental health services and child protection professionals. On the first day of the inspection, the headteacher was due to give a presentation to police officers on the vulnerabilities of young people on the autistic spectrum. This is indicative of the senior leadership team's commitment to building strong networks to enhance the life chances of vulnerable young people.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The care and support delivered to residential pupils focuses on developing resilience, independence, and cooperation through encouragement, engagement and empowerment. This approach is known at the school as 'RICE³'. It has become embedded in practice, and care staff take account of the principles behind the model when developing care plans and behaviour management strategies, and in their day-to-day interactions with young people. Consequently, young people receive consistent care. This provides them with stability, and helps them to settle quickly when they first become residential pupils. One young person said, 'Becoming a boarder was okay. I feel very safe here.' This stability helps to ensure that residential pupil's progress very well in many areas of their lives.

The RICE³ model has been developed to include an assessment tool, which is used to identify pupils' social and emotional development needs. It is an innovative tool, developed by the school, to ensure that the holistic needs of young people can be met. It helps to ensure that residential care staff have a thorough understanding of the individual needs of the pupils. Care staff know the pupils well, and are instantly able to describe each individual's vulnerabilities, care needs and achievements. The assessment tool is used to develop individual care plans, which set realistic targets for pupils to achieve in the residential facility. The pupils take an active role in assessing their progress against the targets. This inclusive approach ensures that they feel valued and helps them to take pride in their achievements.

The residential facility promotes a culture of respect for one another. This contributes to the positive peer relationships evident in the residential accommodation. Staff clearly value the individuality of each pupil. However, one aspect of treating young people with dignity and respect is not given sufficient consideration. The shower cubicles offer young people the option of private showering and changing, but the communal changing areas make some young people feel uncomfortable. They are not assured of privacy in their bedrooms either, as it is normal practice for bedroom doors to be kept ajar.

Residential pupils can access a broad range of activities, provided on the school site and in the local community. Many of these help young people to develop practical skills such as cooking. A 'let's get cooking club', run in conjunction with the children's food trust, is popular with many pupils. Other activities provide good opportunities to take exercise and to learn new skills. Many residential pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. At the time of this inspection, many residential pupils were preparing to go on a residential performing arts course, and demonstrated enthusiasm and excitement for the days ahead. Excellent links have been made with a local girls' school, and social events, such as summer barbecues, enable the boys to develop their social skills and to build new friendships.

The health care needs of young people are met well. There is a good range of well-prepared, nutritional meals and snacks available, using locally sourced fresh ingredients. Physical exercise is encouraged and forms part of the activity programme available to residential pupils. Staff monitor the emotional well-being and psychological health of pupils, and take a proactive approach to securing specialist external support services. For example, one young person has recently been referred to a young people's mental health voluntary organisation, for work to be undertaken on anger management and building self-esteem. Contact has also been made with other agencies, such as a bereavement counselling service, to obtain advice on how to support young people's emotional well-being. Young people receive advice and guidance on sexual health and relationships in personal, social and health education in school lessons, and often a member of care staff attends these. This ensures that care staff are prepared for answering any questions that residential pupils may have when they return to the residential accommodation.

The procedures for administering and recording medication are robust. An external audit of the procedures has ensured that high standards of practice have been maintained. Residential care staff are trained to administer medication, and there is a process for assessing their competence in carrying out the task. There have been no errors in the administration of medication since the last inspection.

Residential pupils are encouraged to maintain contact with their parents and carers, and have access to a school phone if they are unable to use their personal mobile phone. Parents and carers receive weekly updates on the progress that their young person is making. To ensure that good communication channels are maintained, parents and carers have been given a mobile phone number for the care managers. This prevents any delay when parents and carers have an urgent need to share information with those caring for their young people.

The residential accommodation is well maintained. It provides sufficient space for young people to socialise and to relax in their leisure time. Some young people say that the showers could be modernised, although they generally work well, and are promptly repaired if young people bring any defects to the attention of staff. Comfortable furnishing helps to create a warm, welcoming environment. Care managers are committed to ensuring that young people's physical needs are met, and identify where improvements could be made. For example, there is a rolling programme for renewing mattresses in all bedrooms.

The standard of practice has significantly improved since the inspection undertaken in January 2016, when the residential provision was judged to require improvement. Five of the seven points for improvement made at the last inspection directly related to the protection of young people. The school's diligent response to each area has been rigorous, timely and thorough. Clear systems protect young people.

Internal systems for sharing information, relating to concerns for a young person's welfare, have been improved. This ensures that residential managers and staff have a thorough understanding of each residential pupil's vulnerabilities and associated risks. Weekly meetings take place between the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the four deputy DSLs. This provides the opportunity to review 'expression of concern' forms completed by staff, to analyse any potential risks to young people and to agree a course of action when needed.

Individual risk assessments are now robust. They take into account relevant historical background information, and the current circumstances of the young person. These are used to inform the decision-making process in the allocation of shared bedrooms. Residential care staff are familiar with young people's risk assessments, and take these into account when developing strategies for caring and supporting the pupils. Risk assessments are kept under review and are one of the tools used to evaluate whether a young person's risk level is increasing or decreasing.

Inspectors identified one shortfall relating to risk management, in respect of young people who may sleep walk. The potential for a sleep walker to harm himself and to compromise the safety and security of others if they leave their bedroom during the night has not been fully analysed.

Highly effective communication now takes place with external agencies, when concerns for a residential pupil's well-being emerge. This has included consultation with the local authority safeguarding and child protection team, and multi-agency referrals when young people exhibit behaviour indicative of poor mental health. Similarly, senior managers initiate discussion with the designated officer when concerns come to light regarding the practice of current or former staff members. Senior staff members make a valid contribution to multi-agency meetings focused on the welfare of pupils, and complete any tasks allocated to the school in a timely and effective manner.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a clear understanding of the need to communicate with the disclosure and barring service, when poor professional practice has been substantiated. The headteacher has initiated discussion with the county education safeguarding advisor, to clarify the protocol for taking such action. Consultation has also taken place with the designated officer to ensure that correct procedures are followed.

Recruitment and selection procedures are generally thorough, and focused on the prevention of employing unsuitable adults from working with young people. Appropriate background checks are undertaken, and robust risk management procedures are used to strengthen safe recruitment. During the inspection, senior managers made changes to documentation, to further strengthen the process of exploring potential gaps in applicants' career histories.

A key area of practice that has improved since the last inspection relates to the potential for young people to disclose a safeguarding concern via the online

questionnaires that they complete on the quality of care. There was previously a danger that staff would not be able to find out who completed the questionnaire, potentially leaving them at risk. Staff now have the ability to identify which device was used to complete each questionnaire, and a record is kept of who was using the device when the questionnaire was completed. Consequently, any young person who was to make a comment indicating that they may be at risk of harm can now be identified and supported if necessary.

These improvements have ensured that the safety and protection of residential pupils is prioritised. As a result, they feel safe and consistently say that they would speak to a member of staff if they had any worries. This point is illustrated in the minutes of a recent pupils' school council meeting. Pupils were consulted on whether an on-line tool should be introduced for them to report any worries that they may have. The view of the pupils was that this was not necessary, as they have the confidence to speak directly to staff if anything is troubling them.

Residential pupils report that bullying is not a concern for them, and that when isolated incidents do occur, staff are quick to address the matter. One of the care managers spoken to during the inspection was fully aware of a particular pupil's anxieties about one of his peers, who had just become a residential pupil. The care manager was familiar with the tensions in the pupils' relationship, and was able to describe how the situation would be monitored, and how the pupils would be supported to resolve any future conflict.

Highly effective strategies support residential pupils to manage their behaviour. These are consistent throughout the school, ensuring that young people are familiar with boundaries and expectations. One technique, known as the restart strategy, or 'REST', was seen by inspectors to be implemented in practice. This allows pupils to withdraw from a stressful situation, without feeling that they are being punished. Positive behaviour is encouraged in the residential facility through incentives, such as earning raffle tickets for a weekly draw. Staff employ de-escalation techniques in response to any challenging behaviour, and these minimise the potential for conflict effectively. As a result, there have been no physical restraints of young people in the residential facility since the last inspection.

There have been no occasions when residential pupils have gone missing from the school. All residential care staff are familiar with the policy and procedures that they need to follow if an incident does occur. Care managers adopt a proactive approach to minimising the potential for young people to go missing. When a young person with a history of going missing was recently referred to the residential facility, care managers began gathering information and assessing the likely risks before any decision was taken on whether he should become a residential pupil.

Staff have a thorough understanding of the risks that young people face when accessing the internet and social media. Young people are frequently advised on how to keep themselves safe, both in school and in the residential facility. Residential pupils undertake a 'fit4life' course, which includes modules on internet safety and exploitation. These elements of the course are being developed in partnership with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The effectiveness of this approach was recently demonstrated when a pupil disclosed to staff that he had concerns that a former member of staff was trying to contact him via

social media. Senior managers ensured that appropriate action was taken to address the situation. School internet devices are electronically monitored, so that any risks associated with internet grooming or sharing of extremist views are quickly identified and investigated.

Since the last inspection, members of the governing body have taken a proactive role in monitoring child protection practice. A governor now attends every third DSL meeting and reports any safeguarding issues to the full governing body. The chair of the governing body stated that governors now have 'a greater understanding of the challenges and work-load in respect of keeping pupils safe.'

A new system for monitoring health and safety arrangements has been introduced. This is an effective way of ensuring that hazards are promptly identified and that corrective action is taken. All health and safety checks are completed within specified timeframes. An action plan was devised following the completion of the most recent fire risk assessment and this has been implemented. This ensures that residential pupils live in a physically safe environment.

The perimeter fence does not currently prevent access to the school site. The headteacher is currently in discussion with the relevant authorities on how to make the site more secure. The residential accommodation is secured at night, but there has been no recent review of night-time security measures, or assessment of whether additional measures are needed, in light of the open access to the premises.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The residential provision is effectively managed by two residential care managers, who both hold the level 4 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in health and social care, and are studying for the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. One manager takes responsibility for strategic development, while the other focuses on day-to-day operational matters. Both have substantial experience of working with young people in a residential setting. They lead a team of skilled and committed residential care staff, who either have, or are working towards, relevant childcare qualifications.

The residential care managers receive excellent support from the headteacher, who has been pivotal in raising standards since the last inspection. This includes weekly supervision, which is overseen by an external consultant, and performance appraisals that prioritise professional development. The headteacher and senior leadership team, including the residential care managers, developed a comprehensive action plan following the last inspection. This has been implemented and reviewed frequently, to ensure that all points for improvement raised in the inspection have been addressed effectively.

Two of these areas for improvement related specifically to the effectiveness of leaders and managers. These were the need for residential care managers to receive supervision, and for governors to make occasional visits to pupils residing in the residential facility. 'Governor days' have now been introduced, which provide excellent opportunities for residential pupils to interact with members of the governing body. A

governor has also taken on specific responsibilities for monitoring the residential provision. These developments have enhanced the governing body's ability to scrutinise the quality of care being delivered.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a commitment to meeting the needs of residential pupils and have high aspirations for their social, emotional and educational development. These values are shared by residential care staff, who view the senior leadership team as 'knowledgeable, approachable, and always prepared to make time for you'. This collaborative style of working ensures that the supportive culture and ethos of the school permeates the establishment. The ethos centres around an approach known as RICE³, described earlier in this report. Leaders and managers have ensured that this approach is understood and implemented in practice. Care staff were able to describe confidently how their interactions with pupils are guided by the RICE³ principles. This ensures that young people receive consistency of care.

Leaders and managers ensure that they are familiar with research and innovative ways of meeting the specific needs of pupils at the school. A practice model known as 'Mindfulness' has been identified as having the potential to help pupils to develop their social skills and capacity to empathise. Some of the techniques from this model are being introduced into daily routines. This demonstrates the senior leadership team's commitment to adopting creative approaches to enhancing the life experiences of young people.

Strong and effective systems for monitoring the quality of care provided to residential pupils ensure that any weaknesses are quickly identified and that remedial action is taken. Weekly meetings between the deputy headteacher and special educational needs co-ordinator take place, to evaluate the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies. In addition, weekly DSL meetings assess whether the care being delivered meets residential pupils' safety needs. An independent visitor, who is new in post, provides effective external scrutiny of the residential provision. The independent visitor demonstrates a commitment to raising standards beyond the expectations of the national minimum standards, and refers to the quality standards for children's homes as a benchmark for good practice.

Leaders and managers encourage feedback from a wide range of stakeholders on the performance of the residential facility. There is a strong commitment to hearing the views of residential pupils and their parents and carers, and many opportunities are provided for these to be expressed. Similarly, external audits of practice are welcomed, and seen as an opportunity to learn and to improve continuously. There is a robust response to complaints and any serious incidents that occur. They are used effectively as a trigger for practice reflection, and for identifying any shortfalls in the standards of care.'

Staff are able to access a good range of training courses, focused on the specific needs of pupils. These include training on child protection and behaviour management. Staff express the view that training provides them with the right knowledge and skills to care for the residential pupils, and to protect them from harm. In discussion, staff were able to describe confidently the warning signs that would alert them to a young person being exploited or exposed to extremist views. Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive additional training and guidance in relation to young people diagnosed with specific conditions, such as pathological avoidance disorder. This ensures that staff have a good

understanding of young people's needs and the reasons behind particular behaviour management strategies.

The residential facility is a highly valued, fully integrated part of the school's provision. Good communication channels between care and teaching staff ensure that there is a shared approach to meeting the needs of young people and to overcoming any challenges that might compromise the standard of care being delivered.

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 that the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services that 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 that children and young people are not protected or that their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or that 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	34
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to16
Headteacher	Paul Jensen
Date of previous boarding inspection	12 January 2016
Telephone number	01883 342281
Email address	pjensen@sunnydown.surrey.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/ofsted." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

if you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.co.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016

