

Pield Heath School

Pield Heath House RC School, Pield Heath Road, UXBRIDGE, Middlesex UB8 3NW

Inspection dates	05/12/2016 to 07/12/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Good	2
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

- Competent leaders, managers and staff have created a deeply caring and nurturing residential special school. They have translated their vision effectively into excellent practice.
- A distributive leadership style, rigorous monitoring, an inclusive approach and strong partnership with parents and other professionals have secured exceptionally positive outcomes for children and young people. They blossom and thrive across different aspects of their development and welfare.
- Excellent safeguarding practice is fully embedded within the school community.
- The behaviour management practice is extraordinarily effective at promoting and supporting children's and young people's safer behaviours.

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 children's general health information is always updated in a timely manner.
- Improve the scrutiny of the medication audits.

Information about this inspection

The school had approximately five hours' notice of inspection. Inspection activities included: spending time with children, young people and staff in the residential house and observing care practice; a tour of the residence including a visit to the school's art club; meetings with two parents and the school's leaders, managers and staff, both on the educational and residential side; and telephone conversations with another parent, a social worker and the designated safeguarding lead for Hillingdon local authority. The inspector scrutinised a wide range of records and policies, and children's and staff files. She took into account the information gathered from Parent View.

Inspection team

Seka Graovac

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Pield Heath School is a non-maintained, co-educational, day and residential special school for children and young people between the ages of 7 and 19 years who have complex needs, moderate to severe learning difficulties, and associated communication problems. The school offers weekly boarding and overnight short break care. Currently, there are no weekly boarders and 14 students receive short breaks. The longest short break is two nights a week. Accommodation is provided at St Joseph's, a house located on the school site. The school was founded by the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and they remain the trustees. A convent and nursing home are also located in the grounds of the school. The school was last inspected in October 2015.

The inspector met with five children and young people who have short breaks at this residential special school. None of them were able to engage in a conversation about the quality of the residential school, but the inspector was able to observe the children in the residential environment.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

This is an outstanding service because children make exceptional progress as a direct result of their experiences at this school. Children make progress across all areas of their development. Leaders, managers and staff have an unwavering commitment to continued improvement, which is focused on the needs of children. The whole school approach includes highly effective partnership working with parents, placing authorities and external agencies. Together with rigorous monitoring activities, this approach consistently secures exceptionally positive experiences for children and young people. They blossom and thrive from these positive experiences and make outstanding progress.

Children and young people seem to love staying overnight at the school. This was evident at the inspection from their facial expressions and other non-verbal behaviours. While at the residence, their faces were lit up with excitement and joy. They were almost continually smiling and making happy sounds. They were moving comfortably and confidently around the space. They seemed very happy to see staff members. They listened to them and related to them with ease. Parents said that their children really enjoy their short breaks. They provided exceptionally positive feedback about the residential service. One parent said that this was the only place where her son was happy to stay without his family. She said that, when they tried using other services, he would not let them leave without him. Some parents said that whenever they popped into the residence, often unannounced, children and young people were positively engaged and seemed happy.

The head of care and residential staff have created a well-organised, safe, calm, caring and highly nurturing environment. They consistently provide an environment in which speech and language are effectively reinforced by the use of visual symbols and signs. Staff members are exceptionally skilled at making children and young people feel understood and valued. Staff are very sensitive to the subtle changes in the children's and young people's facial expressions and behaviours and adapt their approach accordingly. They are aware of the differing speeds and the ways in which different children and young people process information. They know exactly when to give each child space and when and how to guide them to a different activity or environment. This often involves using visual prompts. Their timely, precise, consistent and skilled interventions prevent escalation of negative experiences/behaviours and strongly promote a positive atmosphere at the residence. Potentially negative behaviours are addressed at an early stage, with firmness and kindness.

Children and young people respond exceptionally well to having short breaks at this school. They have built trusting relationships with staff members and friendships with other children and young people. They have positive experiences in a safe and familiar environment. This reduces their anxiety levels and prepares them well for new experiences and learning. As a result, the children and young people have become more engaged and self-assured. During this inspection, children were observed engaging in sensory activities that promoted the development of their fine-motor skills and the understanding of actions and consequences.

Children and young people have learned to share resources and to collaborate with each

other. They regularly visit local clubs and engage in various activities in the community, such as playing table tennis and tai chi. Their understanding, communication and social skills have improved significantly. At the inspection, a mother talked about her joy when her son started speaking. There had been concerns prior to his coming to this school that he might not be able to speak. A young person proudly showed to the inspector that he had learned to type his name. The school's annual report shows the excellent progress that the children and young people have achieved in terms of the development of the functional skills that underpin communication.

The children's and young people's annual reviews, numerous certificates of achievements and photographic evidence clearly show that they have made excellent progress in relation to their education, health, emotional, social and psychological well-being. Their life chances have been enhanced due to their residential experience. The residential provision makes a strong, positive contribution to their effective preparation for adulthood. The school uses a consistent approach and ongoing evaluation of outcomes to effectively promote children's and young people's learning and development of skills. Some young people have achieved levels of independence that go beyond what was originally thought possible for them to achieve. Examples include being able to independently dress/undress, use a toilet, walk from one classroom to the next, travel on public transport, make breakfast, set the dining table, load a dishwasher and pay for shopping.

Parents provided exceptionally positive feedback about the quality of the residential service and its impact on their children. A mother described the residence as 'an absolute heaven' for her son. She talked about the other schools that he previously attended that were unable to help her son make any progress or just simply keep him safe. Another parent, who also judged this school to be outstanding, described it as the best school her son had attended. This school has made a strong, positive difference in the lives of the children, young people and their families.

The quality of care and support

Good

Children and young people receive good healthcare. Careful sharing of health information between parents and staff ensures that children's and young people's health needs are met. They receive comprehensive therapeutic support and always receive the medication that has been prescribed for them. However, multiple nursing personnel changes over the last 12 months have had a negative impact on the speed in which general health records are updated, and on one occasion impacted on the level of scrutiny of the medication audits. These weaknesses have not had any negative impact on the actual healthcare that the children and young people have received. However, the record keeping in relation to healthcare needs to improve, in order to bring it in line with the excellent quality of the other aspects of the service.

Children and young people are always treated with dignity, respect and emotional warmth. Staff are effective in supporting children's and young people's identity, and promoting the values of equality, diversity and inclusion in the school.

Residential, therapeutic and education teams work closely together to ensure that the children's and young people's individual needs are well understood and met. They meet on a regular basis to agree joint strategies and evaluate their effectiveness. Meaningful

partnerships extend to parents and other professionals involved in the children's and young people's lives. For example, the therapeutic team has provided information and guidance at the parents' forum on the specific approach to behaviour management. Staff have visited some families to provide more specific advice to the families in their own environment. Children and young people receive consistent and joint support that effectively addresses and meets the whole spectrum of their diverse and often highly complex needs.

Care planning is child focused, individually tailored and highly effective. The individual care plans comprehensively describe children's and young people's needs, preferences and choices. Their careful implementation and the effective use of individual targets support children's learning and development exceptionally well. Some parents who spoke to the inspector highlighted the school's philosophy that children learn differently, and planning for that is one of the main factors that makes this school, in their view, outstanding. Children and young people benefit from receiving a 24-hour curriculum. They get involved in a broad range of recreational and learning activities, within the school grounds and in the local community. They contribute to the school's strong charity-supporting ethos and achieve greater social integration.

Mindful and flexible arrangements for introducing students to the residential provision enable them to settle with ease into the new environment.

The residential building is well maintained and comfortably furnished to promote a feeling of relaxation and safety. Its spaciousness allows children and young people to safely walk around or settle away from others, if that is what they need at a particular time. While being sensitive to the children's and young people's needs and choices, staff guide them effectively to adopt more constructive behaviours if necessary.

Staff effectively maximise children's and young people's independence through implementing a comprehensive living skills programme. Transition to adulthood is managed sensitively.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare are paramount for the school. There is an effective whole school approach to safeguarding and a strong feeling of shared ownership among the staff.

Staff have high safeguarding awareness. They take full responsibility for identifying risks online and in real life, and protecting children and young people from those risks. The safeguarding knowledge of staff and their consistently caring attitudes and vigilance, together with the robust implementation of the comprehensive policies and procedures, mean that the excellent safeguarding practice is fully embedded in the setting.

Behaviour management and risk management practice are robust, dynamic and highly effective at minimising the risks and promoting children's and young people's safer behaviours. Incidents are rare, with no physical interventions in the residence. There have been no significant incidents of any kind at the residence since the last inspection. Taking into account the high levels of the children's and young people's difficulties and their past behaviours, this is a real success. No children or young people have been

missing or have put themselves at risk of exploitation or radicalisation. There have been no incidents of bullying or intimidation.

The school's behaviour management practice is extraordinarily effective at promoting constructive behaviours. With the embedding of the particular behaviour management approach that the school introduced last year, the incidents requiring a physical intervention have reduced in the whole school, from nine to one in the last 12 months. The overall number of incidents in the whole school reduced from 120 to 86. Staff consistently implement comprehensive individual behaviour plans. They keep firm boundaries, while at the same time showing great kindness, patience and care towards children and young people. To promote children's and young people's moral and social development, they also give 'kindness rewards' to them, when it is appropriate. Staff use creative ways to promote and reward positive behaviours. For example, staff use visual props that children easily relate to, such as adding marbles to jars allocated to each child or a young person, to celebrate their individual achievements.

Staff closely monitor and record children's and young people's achievements on a daily basis. Examples include: 'Hung his coat up, unpacked his bag and put his belongings away and tried to put the iPad on charge by himself.' Children and young people are given beautifully designed certificates of achievements. They feel good about themselves. The low level of incidents testifies that they have become more able to regulate their emotions and behaviours. They have learned to leave the situations that upset them and make them feel angry, or to use an object that calms them, such as kneading putty. Their emotional resilience and flexibility of thought have improved. They have become more able to express themselves constructively. They have started making more informed and safer choices. They have made excellent progress from having frequent outbursts of challenging behaviour in the past, to engaging positively with staff and other children and young people.

The residence is imbued with a calm, orderly and positive atmosphere. The inspector observed children, young people and staff engaged in various activities with a smile on their faces and a sense of purpose. Many of them were softly humming and making other positive sounds. The school's mission statement 'to help shape communities of gentleness, justice and peace' was evident in practice.

The trusting relationships and, in some cases, deep bonds, between staff and children and young people that have developed over the years act as a strong safeguarding factor. Many children and young people have high levels of anxiety and complex, sometimes profound, needs relating to their behaviour, communication and social interaction in the outside world. They have developed a deep sense of safety and calm when they are at the residence or out in the community with the staff members. At the inspection, parents said that the school, including the residence, had their full trust. They said that, when their children were at this residential school, they did not worry.

Excellent health and safety and security arrangements ensure that the physical environment remains safe. Staff recruitment is robust and there has been no need to use agency staff in the residential setting. The safeguarding designated lead for the local authority confirmed to the inspector that the school followed good practice and appropriate procedures when handling allegations against members of staff.

Leaders and managers are inspirational, competent and influential in changing the lives of children and young people. They have created a culture of high expectations and advocate exceptionally well for children and young people. They model excellent professional behaviours. They have translated their vision effectively into excellent practice.

A strong school community has been built on the shared care values. Helping children and young people to fulfil their potential is at the centre of the school's ethos. The whole school approach includes education, therapy and social care teams. It translates effectively into high quality, integrated and consistent support provided to children and young people.

Governors receive regular and comprehensive information about the school and its residential provision. They have a clear oversight of the impact that the school has had on the outcomes for children and young people. The independent visitor's robust termly monitoring reports add value to the school's internal quality assurance processes.

Leaders and managers are realistic in their self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. With the history of outstanding judgements, they have continued to look for ways to improve the service. They have recently created a post of SEND manager, with the specific role to give strength to the voice of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Clear plans are in place to strengthen the provision and develop it further. For example, a qualified nurse has been recruited to commence working at the school in January 2017.

Leaders and managers have used recent whistleblowing information in a positive way. They saw it as an opportunity to scrutinise their policies, procedures and practice, and to consider the underlying reasons that might have led to the whistleblowing. They have shared their findings with the local authority, demonstrating honesty, transparency and a strong improvement ethos. The allegations were deemed to be unfounded.

The head of residential care is a valued member of the school's senior leadership team. This demonstrates the importance that the school attaches to its residential provision and to the distributive model of leadership.

The residential provision is managed with very high levels of efficiency and effectiveness. A recently recruited head of care has appropriate qualifications, experience, skills, motivation and aptitudes to continue to raise the quality of the residential service.

High staff retention levels add to the children's and young people's experience of consistency and stability. The records of duty rosters demonstrate that staffing levels are maintained at suitably high levels. Staff receive excellent management support, guidance and training. The school is well resourced to realise its statement of purpose.

The school meets all national minimum standards for boarding schools and has continued to consistently exceed many of them.

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 the '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 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	102466
Social care unique reference number	SC027138
DfE registration number	312/7006

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.

Type of school	Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	14
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	7 to 19
Headteacher	Sister Julie Rose
Date of previous boarding inspection	14/10/2015
Telephone number	01895 258507
Email address	julie.rose@pieldheathschool.org.uk

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