

# Limpsfield Grange School

89 Bluehouse Lane, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0RZ

Inspection dates		22/02/2017 to 24/02/2017
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience and benefit from trusting, warm relationships with the staff who care for them. The staff understand how autistic spectrum disorders can impact on pupils' everyday lives.
- Staff support the residential pupils to make the most of the opportunities that the school and the residential provision offer. This results in improvements in key areas such as social integration and emotional well-being. In addition, the residential pupils make tremendous progress in raising their self-esteem and confidence. For many, this progress has exceeded expectations.
- Close multidisciplinary working ensures that each residential pupil's needs are known, planned for and met to a high standard. This effective co-working contributes to the excellent progress that residential pupils make.
- The management team is strong and stable. It provides clear leadership and promotes a culture of high expectations and standards. Leaders and managers make excellent use of a range of thorough monitoring activities to improve the experiences and progress of the pupils. A strong and challenging governing body adds to the scrutiny of the school's performance.
- The safety and well-being of residential pupils are prioritised. This ensures that they feel cared for, valued and respected. Difference and individuality are recognised and respected.
- Rigorous safeguarding systems ensure that all issues are addressed promptly and

effectively. Key staff with responsibility for safeguarding work well together and challenge other professionals when needed.

- Parents speak highly about the care that residential pupils receive and praise the communication that they receive from school staff.

### **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 minutes of all school council meetings are consistently recorded and that actions are identified.
- Ensure that telephone verification is undertaken of all references in relation to staff recruitment.

## Information about this inspection

The school was given three hours' notice of the inspection. A tour of the residential accommodation was undertaken. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the head of residential provision, the school business manager, staff and governors. The inspector joined residential pupils for meals and for activities in the local community. Discussions were held with residential pupils. Telephone or email contact was made with parents and the local safeguarding team. A range of records relating to the care provided were examined.

Liz Driver

lead social care inspector

# **Full report**

## **Information about this school**

Limpsfield Grange School is a maintained day and residential special school catering for girls between the ages of 11 and 16 who have communication and interaction difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan, and have a wide range of needs. Many have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder, including Asperger syndrome, and suffer from high and persistent levels of anxiety. Residential accommodation is available from Monday to Thursday. Currently, 44 pupils access the boarding provision. Some of these are on a shared basis, as there are 24 available beds. The school is situated in the residential area of Oxted, Surrey. The school was last inspected in March 2016.

## Inspection judgements

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

**Outstanding**

Residential pupils benefit from the unique approach taken by the school with regard to educating and caring for girls who have an autistic spectrum disorder. The residential provision's focus is on supporting education and addressing the three main areas that affect the day-to-day lives of the pupils: social isolation, anxiety and mental health.

Social isolation is addressed by building on confidence and self-esteem so that pupils can engage in a wide range of activities in the local, wider and national community. Locally, pupils join clubs and access these alongside young people who live in the community. The pupils participate in local projects such as the local radio station. This helps pupils to gain skills and confidence in, for example, interviewing people. Wider afield, pupils make friends and are successful in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Nationally, they contribute to the debate on care and education for young people with autistic spectrum disorders. Some pupils have presented at conferences to professionals about what it is like to live with an autistic spectrum disorder. In addition, pupils have written and published books on autistic spectrum disorders and were recently part of a television programme looking at how the school has the expertise to provide its unique approach.

Anxieties are addressed through building trusting and honest relationships between pupils and the staff team. Anxieties are discussed openly and a wide range of successful individualised strategies are applied to enable the pupils to lessen their levels of anxiety. This helps pupils to manage the resulting behaviours and, in turn, helps them to access full-time education or engage in social activities. Staff are creative in developing strategies.

Mental health concerns are addressed through the staff team having excellent knowledge and understanding of autistic spectrum disorders and identifying when a pupil requires more expert input. Referrals are made to specialist professionals if needed. The staff are trained to manage a range of issues such as self-harm. Training in mental health first aid adds to the expertise of the staff team.

Overall, the residential pupils receive highly personalised care and support. The residential experience clearly has a positive impact on their educational and social progress, and on their emotional well-being. The staff have implemented improved recording systems that clearly show the progress made by the residential pupils in all areas of their lives. Pupils who have in the past found school extremely challenging are learning how to maximise their personal development and future life chances. Pupils are very happy at the school. Comments made by pupils included: 'This is the best school I ever been to' and 'The staff really do understand me and I feel very happy here'.

Developing life skills is a clear focus of the residential provision. The staff support pupils to become independent and active citizens of the future. The 'rainbow curriculum' provides a structured, comprehensive learning and skills programme which includes work experience and part-time paid work. Innovative transition plans provide pupils

with the skills and confidence to access resources in their own local communities. This prepares pupils for moving on successfully.

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

### **Outstanding**

The staff are experts in providing highly individualised care and support. They work in an extremely nurturing manner and are highly sensitive to all pupils' daily worries and anxieties. The staff know the pupils well, and parents commented positively about the relationships between the staff and the pupils.

Care and support are delivered by a stable team of committed and professional staff. The head of residential leads by example, and regularly works in the residential building to ensure that the quality of care continues at a high standard. Observation of staff practice during the inspection showed that staff treat pupils with the highest degree of respect and dignity at all times. Staff demonstrated expert knowledge and practice of managing autistic related behaviours in a calm and sensitive way. The staff work very closely with each other and are confident in each other's abilities and support.

Staff are hugely successful in identifying individual needs at an initial stage and addressing these across all aspects of the pupils' life in the school. Assessments allow staff to be aware of possible risks, for example self-harm and sexualised behaviours. Close monitoring ensures that the girls continue to achieve and, in many cases, extend their achievements. Residential pupils are influential in the creation of their placement plans. These identify the support and strategies required to meet their needs. This can be seen in the child-friendly care plan diaries that pupils update daily. These provide an overview of pupils' day-to-day life, including their favourite things, sources of support, activities and arrangements for managing anxieties. The pupils' contribution to planning helps to develop their self-management skills and confidence. For example, they learn tactics used for managing anxieties and the self-administration of medication – skills that they will need in adult life. Plans also include strategies to promote positive outcomes on agreed individual targets. Placement plans are continually being developed to cover additional areas, as needs are identified.

All aspects of the pupils' health needs are professionally met and managed. The administration of medication procedures are strong, with excellent oversight by senior leaders. This ensures safe practice. There is an organised system to manage accidents and illnesses, with detailed reporting and monitoring. There are sufficient numbers of staff qualified to administer first aid. All consents and permissions are sought from parents/carers in relation to dental and medical treatments, and the administration of first aid. Overall, the health provision is well organised.

Residential pupils have a range of ways in which they can raise their views, opinions and concerns, including residential forums, surveys and questionnaires. In addition, the school council is active. However, there is inconsistency in the recording of the meetings and the actions agreed. Informal discussions with the staff take place as part of the daily routine, providing opportunities for pupils to put forward their views. An independent visitor and student advocate visit throughout the year, giving pupils independent consultation opportunities. Residential pupils gain confidence in expressing their views and feel that their opinions are important.

Accommodation is of a good standard, with clear investment in the fabric of the building. New furnishings have added to the quality of the provision. There is a relaxation room with a sensory space, used to offer a calming experience. The pupils respond extremely well to the wonderful atmosphere in the residential provision. They clearly enjoy the accommodation provided and the highly positive experience of being with friends and a happy staff team.

The catering team provides a healthy and nutritious menu. The staff encourage pupils to eat a healthy and varied diet. All specialist diets are catered for. Likes and dislikes are known and sensitively catered for. A change to the arrangements for supper has resulted in the pupils being involved in the preparation and cooking of this meal. This is proving very successful and giving pupils increased confidence in their cooking skills.

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

### **Outstanding**

Arrangements to keep the residential pupils safe are effective. Pupils' safety is clearly a priority and the school is proactive in sustaining excellent practice. All policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are of a high standard and are rigorously monitored. The effective safeguarding arrangements at the school mean that risks to children are minimised.

The dedicated safeguarding team is well organised, communicates efficiently and makes decisions jointly. They have undertaken suitable training and, as a result, are skilled and effective in managing concerns and allegations. When required, they will challenge the external safeguarding agencies to ensure the maximum protection of the pupils. There is excellent record keeping of all concerns and allegations that provides clear chronologies and shows good use of body maps. A designated governor takes a role in the oversight of safeguarding at the school. He is suitably trained and experienced to carry out his responsibilities effectively. He provides strong scrutiny, monitoring and feedback to the governing body, as well as support to the dedicated safeguarding team.

The whole staff team is well trained, vigilant and confident in its safeguarding role. The staff undertake regular training supported by additional updates delivered in full school meetings, residential team meetings and individual supervision sessions. They understand the current issues that can present a risk to pupils, such as sexual exploitation and social media. The staff ensure that the pupils know how to keep safe when out in the wider community. Workshops are provided for pupils and their families/carers to help to keep pupils safe when not at school.

Feedback from the residential pupils indicates that they feel safe and looked after at the school. They are aware of the different ways that they can raise concerns and are confident that the staff will take them seriously. A wide range of external contact details are on display in the residential house.

Behaviour in the residential provision is excellent. The pupils respond very well to the staff's advice and guidance. The staff understand their complex needs and, as a result, pupils develop a sense of safety and trust. The inspector observed residential pupils

being considerate and polite to each other, members of staff and the public when out in the community. Residential pupils say that bullying is not a concern. The staff are very aware of the dynamics of pupils, and address any conflict immediately and effectively. In practice, incidents are few. Physical intervention is not used. The staff know each residential pupil very well, and successfully implement individualised strategies to help pupils to self-regulate their emotions and manage their anxieties. The provision of 'calm boxes', which contain a variety of resources to help to reduce anxiety, worries or frustrations, is an example of how staff continually seek new and creative ways of supporting pupils. Considering the difficulties that pupils have in managing friendships, they make great progress in developing social skills as a result of the support that they receive from the staff. For some pupils, this may be the first time that they have had friends.

All health and safety checks are undertaken and routinely audited. They include checks of the physical environment to ensure that it is safe and secure, and that it protects pupils from risk of harm. Regular fire drills take place so that pupils know what action to take if a fire were to occur.

Robust recruitment procedures ensure as far as possible that all adults are safe to work at the school. All relevant background checks are undertaken. However, not all references were verified by telephone.

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

#### **Outstanding**

The school is led by a strong and highly effective headteacher, supported by a team of senior staff who also demonstrate outstanding commitment and passion. Working together as leaders, they have developed a school at which both staff and pupils can be open and at ease to speak honestly about feelings and worries. The management of the residential provision is impressive. The manager shows creativity and excellent management skills. She is fully supported by a staff team of passionate and positive staff who all work in the best interests of the pupils. Together, they achieve great things and give the pupils an outstanding experience. Feedback from parents confirmed the highly positive impact that the school has, not only on the pupils but also on their families and carers.

This school is a beacon in the world of education and care for girls who have autistic spectrum disorders. The work and research undertaken and delivered by the school across numerous areas are exceptional. The staff are a highly cohesive team and have the ability to think 'outside the box' to deliver creative and new ways of working to enable pupils to achieve.

Staff training and development are a high priority. They are linked to improving the quality of the service and are aligned with the school improvement plan. In addition to core training, staff take additional courses to expand their knowledge and understanding of specific areas in order to benefit the pupils. Areas include mental health first aid, mindfulness and yoga. Through regular, formal supervision sessions, informal discussions and annual appraisals, staff receive a high standard of support. Their practice is regularly reviewed in order to maintain high standards and to ensure that they achieve their objectives.

Robust monitoring and auditing procedures provide scrutiny of the provision's practice and identify areas for further development. They are enhanced by a strong governing body that also provides robust scrutiny and challenge. Regular reports from an independent visitor are evaluative and constructive, and provide a useful tool for improvement.

## 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** SC013885

**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** 70

**Gender of boarders** Girls

**Age range of boarders** 11 to 16

**Headteacher** Sarah Wild

**Date of previous boarding inspection** 21/03/2016

**Telephone number** 01883 713928

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