

Sky College

Sky College, Pickeridge Close, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7HW

Inspection dates

08/03/2017 to 10/03/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

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

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is good because

- Young people are cared for by a dedicated, well-trained staff team that creates a warm, nurturing environment.
- Safeguarding procedures are excellent. The staff receive good-quality training in this area to ensure that their practice is current. The lead for safeguarding is diligent in her role and ensures that all staff are vigilant in their safeguarding practice.
- The leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and plans are in place to further develop the boarding provision.
- The staff are dedicated, well trained and have the young people's development and well-being at the core of all their work. Their enthusiasm and commitment to their work is evident.
- The therapy provision is woven throughout all work undertaken. This approach supports young people to understand their behaviours, their past and prepare for their future.
- Young people benefit from bespoke individualised plans, which are frequently reviewed and updated. Young people are involved in the development of their plans, creating a sense of ownership.
- Young people really enjoy boarding at the school. They are proud of the boarding house and show real enthusiasm for all the activities they are involved in.

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 policy documents are dated, to aid with the monitoring updating of these. In addition, ensure that the school website contains the most current policies.
- Ensure that records of the recruitment process are further developed to contain increased detail of the actual interviews and clarity on whether to appoint or not.
- Ensure that the independent visitor's monitoring reports contain increased detail about the monitoring of records undertaken and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided.
- Ensure that young people's records contain more detailed information about their day-to-day life at the boarding house and the one-to-one work undertaken with them.

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on 8 March 2017 by the inspector to announce the inspection. The inspection took place over three days and feedback was provided at the end of day three. During the inspection, the inspector spoke to and spent time with young people, met with the headteacher, the head of student services, boarding house manager and staff, the therapy team and two of the governors. In addition, telephone calls took place with a parent and a young person. A tour of the boarding accommodation and a review of the school's policies and procedures took place.

Inspection team

Wendy Anderson

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The school is a local authority provision for boys who are subject to a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is located on the outskirts of Taunton. The boarding house is attached to the school and operates as a separate provision. Boarding is used flexibly to meet individual needs and can offer an extended school day for a small number of pupils. Pupils can board up to four weekday nights during term time. The school has 60 boys on role; five are currently using the boarding facility. In addition, two boys have extended days when they take part in activities and have access to additional staff support.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people make good to excellent progress in all aspect of their lives from their starting point at the school. They develop strong relationships with their peers and the staff who care for them. The atmosphere is relaxed and good-humoured.

The safety of young people is given a very high priority by all staff. Staff help young people develop skills to keep themselves safe, and particular emphasis is given to online safety.

Young people who attend boarding benefit from increased attendance at school. In comparison with day pupils, those who board progress well at school. This is due to the ongoing support boarding staff provide for young people with their education.

Young people are able to access a range of therapists and health services. These services help young people make progress in their social, emotional and psychological well-being. As a result, they are able to reflect on their past and prepare for their future.

Behaviour management is a strength of the school. Positive reinforcement is the foundation of the school's approach. The use of physical restraint is minimal and only used as a last resort to protect young people. Staff, including the therapist, talk through events with young people to develop their understanding of incidents that occur. This helps reduce and prevent reoccurrence of behaviours.

The boarding provision is very well managed and led. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths of the service and areas for improvement. They welcome scrutiny. They consider this as another tool they can use to develop practice. Leaders and managers are skilled at using reflective practice to review and develop the service they provide.

Young people and their parents are very positive about the boarding provision. They identify the positive impact it has had and they praised the staff team for all the help and support they provide.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care and support the staff provide for young people are outstanding. Young people have excellent bespoke plans and working strategies. These are frequently reviewed and updated to meet young people's identified and emerging needs. The plans are enhanced by the detailed knowledge the staff team has of each young person. The team is exceptionally skilled at developing relationships with young people based on respect and trust.

From their starting point at the school, young people make good to excellent progress. The collaborative approach across all aspects of the school supports young people's

development as positive members of the school community.

Young people are given help and support to feel comfortable when they move in and stay over for the first time. One parent said that, 'It took special people to make me feel confident and comfortable with my child boarding.' Initially, young people do evening visits, then an overnight stay. Staff then meet with the young person and their parents to review how things have gone and discuss the next steps. The emphasis on a sensitive individualised approach to joining boarding ensures a strong foundation for future success.

Staff have high aspirations for the young people and support them to achieve their goals. They maintain a high standard, understanding the importance of being positive role models for the young people. The team is committed to improving and developing its practices. One team member said, 'The better I am at my role, then the more I can do for the boys.'

The school's therapy model is woven throughout all of the work undertaken by the staff. The approach benefits young people, as plans and strategies are consistent across the school campus. Young people are given support to help them to develop an insight into their own behaviours, emotions and feelings, to understand their histories and put these into context. Young people are supported to develop self-management and coping strategies. These will benefit them in the next stage of their lives.

The boarding house provides young people with a comfortable, welcoming environment in which to live, develop and thrive. There is ample internal and external space and each young person is encouraged to personalise their rooms. Boarders proudly showed the inspector their rooms; these were decorated with lots of posters, toys and photographs of family and friends. Photographs of the young people taking part in activities, or of trips and holidays, are displayed throughout the building. In addition, useful information about keeping safe, helplines, a photo of the independent visitor and upcoming events are displayed. All of this information is presented in a young person-friendly manner.

The range of activities young people can take part in is excellent. Young people said staff frequently asked for their ideas for new events. Young people are able to follow their hobbies, as well as try new things and have new experiences. The quality and range of activities provided is very much valued by young people.

Treating people with dignity and respect is one of the school's core values. Young people commented that they had learned to be tolerant of each other's moods and differences.

Since the last inspection, three boarders took part in an eight day trip to Oman. They had the opportunity to experience a different culture, which they said had changed their perception of people from other backgrounds.

Parents praised the boarding team for the care and the work they have undertaken. One said, 'Boarding has helped me keep my family together.'

Young people are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Staff help them develop practical independence skills in the boarding house and out in the community. This includes young people developing the skills to travel independently.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Young people's safety is at the heart of all the work undertaken by the staff. All aspects of safeguarding are kept high on staff's agenda, and staff clearly demonstrated their understanding of the importance of their role in this work in protecting and promoting the welfare and safety of young people. This approach is supported and enhanced by excellent staff training in safeguarding and child protection.

The school's safeguarding lead is dedicated to her work, and she will robustly chase and challenge others to ensure that swift and effective actions are taken in light of any safeguarding concern. Records of safeguarding matters are detailed, providing clear information on all safeguarding work. The safeguarding lead has developed a good working relationship with the designated officer and other professionals.

The staff are sensitive to the vulnerabilities of the young people they care for. They develop highly effective strategies for keeping the young people safe and for helping young people to develop their own skills for safety. This includes exceptional work on internet safety.

All young people spoken to said they felt very safe at the school. One said, 'It's like having another family; we all look after each other.' Young people said there are 'loads' of staff they would talk to if they were worried about anything. The top of their lists were the boarding staff.

The promotion, reinforcement and celebration of positive behaviour are the main drivers behind the management of young people's behaviours. There is a points system that runs across school and boarding. Young people really like this system. They are fully involved in the process and proud when they achieve. One young person used his points to go snowboarding.

Restraint is seldom used in boarding. It is only used at the lowest level and to protect young people. Where it is used, appropriate records are maintained and these are closely monitored by leaders and managers.

Since the last inspection, no boarder has gone missing from the school. There are robust procedures in place, and staff demonstrated a good working knowledge of these.

Excellent risk assessments are in place for all aspects of the young people's lives. The staff team ensures that these are currently reviewed to reflect any changes and developments. Young people take part in regular fire drills; they clearly understand what to do should the fire alarms sound.

The recruitment and vetting of staff is carried out in line with safer recruitment processes. This approach protects young people from adults who may wish to harm them. Records of the recruitment process are appropriate, but could be enhanced by further detail on records of interviews and increased clarity on decision making about whether to appoint or not.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are good. Boarding is led by an experienced, committed and well-respected head of boarding. Leaders, managers and staff have high expectation for the young people in their care. Staff spoken to are very positive about the senior management team from whom they receive good-quality formal and informal support.

Since the last inspection, leaders and manager have ensured that the previous recommendations have been met. The head of boarding's monitoring and review of the service has improved and the information from this is used to develop practice. Young people are provided with additional opportunities to develop their independence skills.

The current staff team is small, but this is relative to the number of young people currently using the boarding provision. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and duty of care. They are well trained and have the young people's well-being at the heart of all their work. They are strong advocates for the young people, and go the extra mile to support young people.

Effective systems to ensure information sharing are established. Communication across school and boarding ensures that all of the key people are fully involved and informed of young people's plans and supporting strategies. This model ensures that there is a consistent and holistic approach to care.

An independent person visits the boarding provision regularly and produces a report. This assists the head of boarding in further developing the service. Independent visitor reports would benefit from increased evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided and more detailed comments on the records reviewed.

Appropriate records are maintained on each young person. These currently do not reflect all the work the staff undertake with the young people. The head of boarding is examining ways in which this can be improved.

The school's policies and procedures are suitable and adhered to in practice. However, with the exception of the safeguarding policy, none had the date on which they were created or reviewed. This would assist future audit and review.

The school's website is in the process of being updated. Currently, some of the information does not reflect current practices.

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 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	123939
Social care unique reference number	SC038758
DfE registration number	933/7006

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	5
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	10 to18
Headteacher	Mr Richard Berry
Date of previous boarding inspection	21/03/2016
Telephone number	01823 275569
Email address	office@skycollege.somerset.sch.uk

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