

Pield Heath School

Pield Heath House RC School, Pield Heath Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3NW
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Pield Heath School is a non-maintained, co-educational, day and residential special school for young people between the ages of seven and 19 years. The school caters for young people who have complex needs, moderate to severe learning difficulties and associated communication problems. The school offers weekly and overnight boarding. Currently no young people stay on a weekly boarding basis, although 14 young people receive overnight boarding. Accommodation is provided at St. Joseph's, a home located on the school site.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 July 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standard of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and provide positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 5 December 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Staff provide young people with an outstanding quality of care.
- Young people receive highly effective support that enables them to make exceptional progress to achieve their full potential.
- The positive behaviour model followed by staff is exceptionally effective at promoting and supporting young people to develop safe, caring and thoughtful behaviours towards each other and the staff team.
- Young people are cared for by highly motivated and skilled care staff who foster a strong sense of safety and value. As a result, young people grow in confidence and enjoy secure and trusting relationships.
- Young people have a clear voice. Staff listen to their hopes and wishes, as well as their concerns. As a result, young people are confident that staff take their views seriously.
- Senior leaders are experts in their field. The senior leadership team, governors and staff are all committed to making continuous improvements to young people's experiences and progress during their residential stays.
- Staff training and formal supervision are highly effective and greatly enhance practice. This means that staff enthusiastically support young people's growth and development with care, knowledge and understanding.
- Young people benefit from staying at a school where equality and diversity are integral to staff practice. This inclusive approach enables young people to express their individual identity with complete acceptance by all who care for them.
- Partnership work between staff, parents and other key agencies is excellent. This approach is successful in supporting young people to achieve their individual aspirations.
- Parents have trust and confidence in the safe care that staff provide.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their emotional understanding and development. The staff team promotes a culture of calm, high aspiration and achievement. Young people enjoy each other's company, show exemplary behaviour and have trusting relationships with staff.

A parent said, 'My daughter feels secure, staff have been brilliant in helping her to interact with other children. As a result, she is becoming confident and making great strides in her sociability, and is doing astonishing things such as attending youth club.'

Young people engage enthusiastically with staff support and guidance that help them learn to live and work together with mutual respect. They engage in a wide variety of activities within the school and the wider community, such as the art club, visits to museums and youth clubs. These give young people the opportunity to mix with their peers in a familiar and reassuring environment. Activities in the local community provide them with the chance to socialise with new peers in a different setting outside of the school. This enables young people to significantly improve their communication and social skills. A parent spoke of her daughter's growing ability to socialise with others: 'She will now sit with children, she smiles and will stroke your hands to show happiness. We can see the changes in her since attending St. Joseph's, as she demonstrates this learning in the family home.'

Young people benefit from, and thoroughly enjoy, staying overnight. This is evident from their positive facial expressions and other non-verbal behaviours; for example, through their calm behaviour and happy demeanour. Young people move confidently around the house and without restriction.

An experienced, confident and stable staff team is a strength of the house. This contributes to the positive and trusting relationships staff have with young people, who in turn feel valued and understood. Young people listen to staff and respond to them with ease. The care manager has created an environment which exudes a high level of calm, efficiency and care. Staff understand, and are sensitive to, the subtle changes in young people's behaviour or routine and adapt their responses accordingly. Staff respond to potentially negative behaviours quickly in a firm yet kind manner. This prevents any escalation in negative behaviour and promotes a positive atmosphere in the home.

Staff work collaboratively across the school and residential provision to ensure that young people receive care that is consistent and focused on meeting all of their needs. Staff meticulously follow the school's 'positive behaviour support' model of intervention. Therefore, the use of sanctions or restraint during residential times is rare.

Young people value the kindness and tolerance shown towards each other and they have fun together. Staff support young people to apologise to each other when necessary and to take responsibility for their own, and peer group, behaviour.

Young people make excellent progress in developing independent living skills. Older young people receive considerable staff support and guidance to learn life skills, such as cooking, laundry and budgeting in preparation for their futures. Positive advocacy by the school has enabled young people to experience work placement opportunities; these have included chef duties and working in a day nursery. As a result, young people improve their self-esteem and confidence, and gain an increased sense of personal achievement. This increases their opportunities and choices for the next stage of their lives.

Young people actively contribute to the operation of the home. A range of regular meetings take place to ensure that they are able to participate, even if they only stay for one night. Communication processes are inclusive. Consequently, young people are empowered and able to contribute ideas that are valued and acted on by managers and staff. The communication and trust between young people and staff are particularly impressive. Staff listen to the concerns of young people and patiently explain when they cannot accommodate a request. This results in young people not feeling the need to use the formal complaints procedures.

Annual reviews highlight the excellent 'young-person-centred' approach adopted by the school. Numerous certificates of merit, video and photographic evidence clearly show the new experiences that the young people participate in and enjoy. These reviews demonstrate the outstanding progress that young people make in relation to their education, social interaction and emotional health. Young people clearly have enhanced life chances because of their experience of residential life.

Equality and diversity are embedded in the culture of the school. Staff and young people accept others for who they are. Staff support young people to celebrate their individual culture and identity and that of others; for example, by promoting and celebrating all religions. The ethos of a strong community built on shared values is evident throughout the school.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of the residential provision and its impact on their children's lives. They all speak of the exceptional difference the school makes to the lives of young people and their families.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Young people benefit from excellent safeguarding practices within the school community. Staff are skilled, experienced and vigilant in safeguarding young people. They use their sound knowledge of effective child protection procedures to keep young people safe. Through warm and trusting relationships, staff create an open and

supportive environment that helps young people to feel confident in bringing any fears or anxieties to them. Young people confidently ask questions of staff, and remind each other to apologise when behaviour is unacceptable. Young people also feel confident to describe their emotions verbally and pictorially, without fear or embarrassment. This demonstrates an open environment where young people and staff interact as a community that enables young people to feel safe.

Young people identify adults in both the school and residential staff teams who they would go to should they have any concerns. In addition, young people have ready access to an independent visitor who visits the home on a termly basis. To further enhance this process, leaders have recently appointed the parent of an ex-pupil on a voluntary basis. They will visit the home to speak with young people, act as a listener and offer advice in addition to the help already given to them. A governor, with primary responsibility for St. Joseph's, visits on a regular basis to observe care, to listen to any concerns and to celebrate achievements. As a result, young people have easy access to adults who they know and feel secure with. This promotes an open atmosphere where young people clearly have a voice.

All staff undertake a comprehensive induction programme with a focus on safeguarding practice. Staff also undertake further advanced training that enhances their understanding of child protection. Managers and staff use safeguarding workshops to reflect on research and the findings of serious case reviews. This helps them to look at what lessons can be learned and increases the effectiveness of safeguarding across the whole school.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. Safeguarding professionals speak highly of the school's transparency and commitment in keeping young people safe. Parents state that they have confidence and trust in the staff team to keep young people safe.

Staff understand the risks for young people but also the importance of teaching them to manage risk within their age, understanding and ability. This helps young people to learn about risks in the school and the wider community without limiting their opportunity to engage fully in activities or trips out.

Bullying is not evident within the home. The school has a clear anti-bullying approach. There is a strong sense of community throughout the school. This means that young people develop meaningful relationships with each other and show real concern for others. There are effective procedures in place should young people go missing from the school. A protocol developed with the police, and excellent levels of staff supervision, ensure that young people do not go missing and are kept safe.

The school utilises the 'positive behaviour support' model approach. This model focuses on promoting and supporting young people in safe and caring behaviours towards each other and the staff team. There have been no incidents requiring the use of restraint since the last inspection. A member of care staff commented, 'The behaviour management training has been excellent. I have learned to look beyond the expressed behaviour and think about what the young person is trying to tell me. It

(the training) has taught me to think before I act.'

Staff consistently implement individual behaviour plans. They maintain firm boundaries while at the same time showing exceptional sensitivity, care and patience. Staff who work in the house function as a seamless team that promotes young people's social and emotional development. The staff team has created a homely, calm and positive environment. This assists young people who have high levels of anxieties and complex needs relating to their communication and behaviour, to interact with each other with kindness and care. It enables young people to manage and regulate their behaviour in a positive way without the need to resort to self-harm or challenging behaviour.

Staff use creative and visual aids that young people can relate to, to promote positive behaviours; for example, adding marbles to a jar allocated to each young person to celebrate individual achievements. Staff monitor and record young people's progress and achievement on a daily basis. The targets and goals that are set are appropriate, achievable and designed to promote independence and emotional resilience. Examples include taking responsibility for laying or clearing the table at mealtimes, hanging up their coats, putting away school equipment and learning from visual aids how to dress themselves.

The school site and residential accommodation provide young people with a safe and secure environment. All visitors complete an electronic record when they first arrive, with bespoke photographic identification. Health and safety checks are comprehensive, with clear actions for any areas for improvement. Young people and staff display a thorough understanding of the school's fire drill and evacuation process.

Safer recruitment processes are robustly followed. Thorough records detail all necessary and updated information on new and existing staff. This ensures that young people are cared for by adults who have been appropriately vetted.

Staff receive specific training in medication administration procedures. Robust systems ensure that all medication is stored securely. Managers have improved the systems for updating health records and conduct regular audits of medication to ensure that practice remains safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential aspect of the school is highly valued and respected. Senior leaders demonstrate highly collaborative relationships. Through regular multi-disciplinary school meetings and governing body liaison, a positive cycle of review and communication is sustained that has young people's views, needs and development at its heart. This holistic approach ensures that all staff participate in planning, receive regular updates and remain committed to continuous improvements for the experiences and progress of young people.

There is a very strong leadership team. Leaders and managers fully support the staff team and its development. The senior team is inspirational and ambitious in promoting positive experiences for all young people who come into the school. They are able to recognise the impact the school has on young people and how they have progressed given their starting points. They lead by example and use all the necessary resources to ensure they fulfil the aims in the school's statement of purpose.

The expertise and commitment of leaders and managers create a deeply caring and nurturing school. Leaders and managers have successfully transferred their vision of care for young people who have special educational needs into outstanding practice. They have done this while continuing to research, evaluate further improvements and raise standards in the delivery of care and education. Leaders and managers have established a progressive learning culture that seeks continuous improvement based on the latest research in supporting young people who have disabilities. They have also developed links with other educational establishments, such as universities, to participate in research.

Governors actively monitor the residential provision and provide clear feedback about their visits. A governor with responsibility for the residential aspects of the school has improved scrutiny of the quality of care. Governors undertake regular visits, some of which are unannounced, and work in conjunction with the care manager to consider how young people can be more involved in having a voice in the development of the residential provision.

The head of care has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of development of the residential provision. They report to the principal and governing body regularly to highlight any developmental needs. This demonstrates the importance that the school attaches to its residential provision.

The residential provision is managed with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. The care manager has appropriate qualifications and experience and is highly motivated to continue to raise the quality of the residential provision. This can be seen, for example, in the recruitment of a listening volunteer with relevant experience of working with children who have disabilities.

Care staff work exceptionally well alongside school staff and other professionals, such as speech and occupational therapists, to ensure that young people make continuous progress against their plans and targets. They share information so each young person has the best possible care, and there is consistency across the disciplines. When young people are looked after by their local authority, key workers ensure that they write clear progress and needs reports for statutory reviews.

A stable and committed staff team fosters a warm, 'family friendly' atmosphere and they demonstrate genuine affection for young people. Parents describe the quality of care as 'excellent', 'life changing' and making a significant difference to their child's 'quality of life'. Parents speak of the school's open door policy, transparency and

partnership working with them to ensure the best possible care for their children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Residential special school details

Social care unique reference number: SC027138

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Sr Julie Rose

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Inspector

Juanita Mayers, social care inspector (lead)



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