

Meadows School

London Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 0RJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Meadows School is a non-maintained residential special school, owned by Barnardo's children's charity. At the time of the inspection, there were 66 pupils on roll with five pupils residing at the school. The residential provision is located in two houses. The boys live within the school grounds and the girls' house is within walking distance of the school. The school provides education and residential provision for pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The residential special school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of previous inspection: 7 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leaders and managers, and all the staff, share a commitment to support the residential pupils to fulfil their potential and become active, independent young people.
- The experienced and stable residential staff recognise and respond well to the residential pupils' individual needs. They know the residential pupils extremely well and provide highly personalised, nurturing care and support to advance their development.
- Excellent cross-disciplinary engagement and collaboration ensure that the residential pupils receive tailored and focused support to meet their specific needs. Support for the residential pupils' psychological and emotional well-being is particularly strong, and is integrated across all aspects of their school experience.
- Extremely positive relationships between the residential staff and the residential pupils are the foundation of successful behaviour strategies.
- Safeguarding the residential pupils is at the heart of the support provided by the residential staff. Proactive safeguarding practice raises the residential pupils' awareness and understanding of the risks they face, and educates them in how to keep themselves safe.
- A strong governing body provides robust scrutiny, challenge and oversight of the provision. The governors prioritise the safety of the pupils and support initiatives to keep them safe. The monitoring of safeguarding processes by the governor responsible for this area is particularly strong.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To link more effectively the residential pupils' care plans, risk assessments to their needs as identified in their Education, Health and Care Plan.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Consider linking care plans and risk assessments more closely to the residential pupils' needs as identified in their Education, Health and Care Plan.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The residential pupils benefit from highly personalised, nurturing care and support from the residential staff. Their positive experiences are directly related to the trusting relationships they form with the residential staff, who have a genuine interest in their welfare and well-being. The residential pupils make significant progress in many aspects of their lives, including developing their social skills, managing their emotions and improving their behaviour.

Working collaboratively with the staff across the school, and particularly with the well-being team, the residential staff use their in-depth knowledge of each residential pupil to ensure that effective support advances their development. The support given by the residential staff applies to all aspects of the residential pupils' lives. Staff encourage the residential pupils to maintain healthy lifestyles, providing guidance on such matters as healthy eating, exercise and activities in the local community. The well-being team recently organised a well-being activity day, giving pupils the opportunity to participate in a range of activities which are known to improve emotional well-being. The school counsellor is available to work directly with residential pupils, and they have opportunities to join emotional literacy groups to help them manage their emotions. This focus on the well-being of the residential pupils has a positive influence on their learning and academic progress.

The staff value the views of the residential pupils. Through the Pupils' Council and house meetings, residential pupils have opportunities to put forward suggestions to improve their experience. Surveys, key-work sessions and informal consultation with residential pupils also provide the residential staff and the managers with important feedback. The managers are responsive and act on the pupils' requests, demonstrating to the residential pupils that they are listened to and that their views are important.

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

Protecting residential pupils and educating them to keep themselves safe underpin the practice of all residential staff. They know the residential pupils extremely well. They recognise and understand the residential pupils' specific vulnerabilities and address these on an individual basis, in addition to a whole-school approach to current safeguarding issues. All the staff take their responsibility for ensuring the safety of residential pupils very seriously, and this extends to raising the residential pupils' awareness and understanding of the risks they face. E-safety and using social media appropriately have a high priority. Safeguarding permeates all aspects of the school.

The residential staff are well trained, alert and confident in their safeguarding role, with the necessary understanding of current issues that can present a risk to the residential pupils, such as sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The residential staff are diligent in informing the designated safeguarding lead of any concerns, and there is a robust procedure for considering any matters affecting the welfare of the residential pupils. Appropriate action is taken, including referral to and consultation with external authorities.

Extremely positive relationships between the residential staff and the residential pupils are the foundation of successful behaviour strategies. Through thoughtful and consistent support from the residential staff, who understand the meaning of the behaviour and the need to maintain clear boundaries, the residential pupils develop a sense of safety, protection and trust. They respond to the support that the residential staff offer. The residential staff use physical intervention in the houses very infrequently. They are well trained in this form of behaviour management, but are confident and skilled in de-escalating potentially challenging behaviour at an early stage and in helping the residential pupils to manage their difficulties. There have been no incidents of residential pupils being reported as missing.

Care plans and risk assessments identify the support and strategies required to advance the residential pupils' development and reduce the potential of harm. However, these are not clearly linked to the needs identified in the residential pupils' Education, Health and Care plans. Targets for the residential pupils are relevant to the specific stage of their development. The residential pupils who are planning for their future after leaving the school receive focused support to assist them in making a successful progression to the next stage of their lives. The residential staff are sensitive and thoughtful in their approach to the residential pupils' specific cultural and identity needs. They are vigilant and responsive to all types of bullying, and foster a culture of respect, dignity and tolerance.

The support for the residential pupils' emotional needs is strong and effective. The well-being team, led by a psychologist, is committed to obtaining a true picture of the emotional needs of the residential pupils who are causing concern. The well-being team meets with the residential staff and the school staff to discuss these needs in depth, in the context of all the information available, and determine how the residential pupils' specific needs can be met. This integrated approach to supporting the residential pupils' emotional and psychological health results in focused and well-thought-out strategies to assist the residential pupils in the school and in their living environment. The well-being team also trains the staff so that they are confident and comfortable in providing this level of support. For example, the staff have received training from the counsellor in how to address sensitive and personal issues around 'loss'. The well-being team pays particular attention to building the resilience of the residential pupils, with careful reviews of progress to inform additional tailored support. Parents have the option of being involved in discussions about their child's emotional well-being, and their resilience in particular. Consequently, the psychological development and emotional well-being of residential pupils is successfully promoted.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

All staff share a commitment to support the residential pupils to fulfil their potential and become active, independent young people. Led by an appropriately qualified and highly experienced head of care, the stable and established staff team is dedicated to providing the residential pupils with support to meet their diverse needs and advice and guidance to help them to develop self-esteem, and to succeed.

The residential pupils benefit from the skills of the residential staff, who are highly competent, and who are focused on developing their knowledge to meet the complex needs of the residential pupils. Through performance and development reviews, comprehensive training and regular supervision, the residential staff receive effective support from the managers to improve their practice and their support for the residential pupils, with a sharp focus on safeguarding them and promoting their well-being.

A strong governing body provides robust scrutiny, challenge and oversight of the residential provision. A particularly knowledgeable and experienced governor closely monitors all safeguarding matters. His depth of knowledge and up-to-date training provide valuable support to the designated safeguarding lead, ensuring that the systems to keep pupils safe are rigorous and robust.

Leaders and managers are proactive in working with external professionals, with particularly vigorous and tenacious challenge when necessary to safeguard the welfare of pupils. The staff team also works effectively in partnership with external professionals, ensuring that the residential pupils receive the specialist support necessary to assist them in achieving positive outcomes.

Leaders and managers have a sharp focus on educating the pupils to keep themselves safe. Resources for the pupils and training for the staff are relevant to the specific vulnerabilities of the pupils. Leaders and managers have identified areas of particular concern, such as radicalisation and e-safety, and they have developed focused resource packages to raise the pupils' awareness of the dangers they face. Parents and carers are included, through workshops, in this drive to provide information, alert them to risks and increase their understanding of the issues. The safeguarding governor commented that: 'The staff continuously try to keep on top of things, and leaders and the staff are ahead of the game. They are very aware of the issues.'

At the last inspection in February 2017, it was recommended that the head of care should receive practice-based supervision from a suitably qualified professional. This is now in place, and provides professional challenge and opportunities for reflection in the context of social work practice.

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 differences 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 whom 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: SC024060

Head teacher/teacher in charge: Mike Price

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Inspector

Jan Hunnam, social care inspector



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