

Unsted Park School

Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1UW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Unsted Park is a residential special school for boys and girls aged seven to 19 years. The school provides day and residential provision for students with autistic spectrum disorders and associated conditions. Residential placements are provided in three boarding houses.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 December 2017

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

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 10 May 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- The senior leadership team has recently and abruptly changed. The acting headteacher and new leadership team are working hard to embed more effective practice into the daily running of the school. Their current focus is on education, but they also recognise the need to improve the residential provision as a major priority.
- Young people's plans do not always contain sufficient detail to ensure that staff can provide them with the nuanced care and support they require, given their emotional well-being or physical needs.
- Safeguarding concerns have not always been referred to partner agencies with the expected urgency, and not at all on one occasion.
- Parents are not consistently confident that the school manages issues effectively, particular with regard to bullying.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- The newly formed senior leadership team is introducing plans to ensure that there is a greater degree of rigour in, and monitoring of, the safeguarding process.
- The wholesale change of leaders in the school, including the governors, has resulted in many positive changes to the functioning of the school, and its processes. These changes have increased the accountability of staff.
- Young people are generally positive about their time in the residential provision. They say they like the staff and have people they would go to if worried or upset. They are able to access a range of activities during the week, and many have made progress, both socially and educationally.

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

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for residential special schools:

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 19.2 All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within three months of confirmation of employment.
- 21.1 The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan, there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans.

Recommendations

- Continue recruiting towards a full staff team for the residential provision.
- Review risk assessments to make them more all-encompassing and give greater direction to staff in managing risk.
- Review medication systems to reduce the likelihood of mistakes in administration and recording.
- Critically evaluate the residential provision and produce an aspirational action plan. Further, monitor the fabric and maintenance of the residential accommodation.
- Ensure that young people, parents and placing authorities are aware of the use of bedroom door alarms, and the reason for their use.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Staff have good knowledge and understanding of young people's needs and abilities. Young people clearly enjoy the company of staff and have positive interactions with them, including playing games or seeking their assistance. Young people who isolate themselves from the group are regularly checked on and encouraged to re-engage.

Staff listen to young people individually and act on their ideas and requests if they are able to do so. Residential group meetings vary in quality, and there is little evidence of senior staff responding to the requests made at the meetings. An independent listener visits regularly, and young people know the person and what her role is.

Young people are generally positive about their time in the residential provision. They like the activities available and the opportunities to socialise with their peers. Most young people have personalised their bedrooms, and see them as their personal space.

Young people's plans require further development to ensure that all information, strategies, risk management and support approaches are detailed fully. Plans do not include information from the input of the multi-disciplinary team in the school, such as speech and language support and behaviour support. Joint working with both partner agencies and parents is now being embedded into practice. The new headteacher is developing and improving this approach by actively engaging all stakeholders.

Young people are developing their social and life skills through cooking, learning positive interactions, performing basic household chores, doing part-time work and accessing the local community. Young people are perceived to have made progress. However, recording is poor and is an area that has been identified by the senior leadership as requiring development. Arrangements are in place to address this shortfall.

Cultural differences and personal identity are respected among young people and staff. Young people celebrate a range of festivals throughout the year and enjoy exploring intriguing food combinations. They are supported to recognise and celebrate individual differences within their peer group, and have a strong sense that all young people are unique.

Young people are supported to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and they learn what this means for them. Their physical health needs are met by parents and carers, and any specific support is provided by the staff team. The emotional health needs of many young people are recognised as being of significant concern. These needs are met through a combination of therapies delivered both on site and in the community.

Young people who are able to keep and administer their own medication do so. The administration records for medication are overly cumbersome, which leads to minor errors.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Young people's actions and demeanours show that they feel comfortable in the residential provision. They approach staff with confidence, and staff are aware of subtle changes in behaviour. Staff have a working knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and child protection, including the specific vulnerabilities of those whom they care for. Evidence of staff understanding of specific issues which place young people at risk, such as exploitation in all forms, is lacking. However, staff are aware of their role in reporting and escalating concerns as required.

Safeguarding arrangements are becoming more robust, with greater senior leader oversight. Recently implemented weekly designated safeguarding lead and deputies meetings ensure that the headteacher has a genuine oversight, and that all leaders involved with safeguarding have an overview of the current and ongoing concerns for young people in the school. There have been delays in reporting concerns to external agencies, including one in recent weeks. Records do not provide clarity and detail of actions from the point of instigation to the outcome. Records highlight that information has been missed, and they are often of poor quality. Internal investigations of allegations and disclosures have historically been particularly weak. Specifically, a child has made disclosures to staff over several months that were not referred to partner agencies.

Staff are not risk averse, and challenge young people to try new activities beyond their comfort zone. However, risk assessments lack detail and are not dynamic. They do not include detail beyond basic information, meaning that staff do not have sufficient direction to manage risk. Additionally, those assessments linking to behavioural or emotional concerns do not indicate how best to support the young people when they are distressed, or minimise risk when they are potentially placing themselves in risky situations.

Staff have regular training in a nationally recognised behaviour management and physical intervention technique. They have access to behaviour support plans which vary in quality and detail, particularly in how best to de-escalate incidents for individual young people. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and how to respond differently in the future.

The physical environment is safe, but lacks regular monitoring to ensure that it remains well maintained and presented. The use of bedroom door sensors is standard practice, but is not detailed in the young person's guide. The kitchens are locked at night, without a reasonable explanation. The locking of kitchen doors was changed during the inspection, under the new senior leader's guidance. Students

who are deemed able to cope with the freedom have door fobs to give them greater independence.

Recruitment practice is robust, and in line with safer recruitment guidance. A particular strength is including photographs of each applicant for referees, to ensure that they are providing a reference for the correct person.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The new senior leadership team is working thoughtfully to identify weaknesses and strengths. Initially, the focus is on education. The staff team is seen as being increasingly strong. Its members are aspirational and are committed to developing the school, although some staff are not fully engaged with this process. The change in leadership has led to some instability, which is affecting the overall outcomes of the school. The senior team is new and is still finding its feet in some areas.

The head of care and deputy head of care are not particularly visible in the residential provision, assuming an administrative rather than a hands-on approach. Their current approach does not ensure that they understand the needs of young people in practice, or that staff feel supported.

Recruitment has been an ongoing concern, and there has been a high turnover of staff across the school. The residential provision currently has two vacancies. However, staff are also performing extra duties during the school day, and this has resulted in shortfalls in records and plans. The planned new staff for classrooms in January 2018 will allow residential staff to focus on their main duties.

Staff say that supervision is regular and effective. Training is regular, and in line with young people's needs. However, not all staff hold a suitable level 3 qualification, or in some cases are even enrolled to start, despite being employed for well over a year. Development plans for the residential provision lack aspiration, and the steps identified to address shortfalls would only achieve minimum standards.

Independent visits are thorough and detailed, and provide scrutiny and challenge. The independent visitor makes recommendations which are reviewed at the next visit. The previous governance arrangements did not provide effective scrutiny or challenge, so senior leaders were not held to account. Under the new governance arrangements, areas of weakness have been identified and this oversight is aiding improving. The arrangements in the residential provision do not benefit from in-house scrutiny to ensure that minor issues are identified, such as the lift being used as storage, poor placement plans or the lack of impact of joint working across the care and therapy settings.

The daily communication between care and education staff is of a good standard. However, the wider sharing of information such as therapy reports and support techniques is weak, and is not included in young people's plans. For example, a

young person requires specific sensory items, but this is not being included in residential plans.

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: SC363144

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Lucy Wood – acting headteacher

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01483 892061

Email address: unstedparkschool@priorygroup.com

Inspector(s)

Jennie Christopher, social care inspector (lead)
Amanda Maxwell, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018