

# Muntham House School

Muntham House School, Barns Green, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0NJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

The school is a non-maintained residential special school for up to 56 boys aged between eight and 19 years, of whom 48 may be boarders. At this inspection there were 24 residential pupils. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. It is a designated school for pupils who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties and who may in addition have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autistic spectrum disorder. The school buildings are set in extensive grounds of 20 acres. Accommodation is located in the main building with a separate building for the sixth form.

The school was last inspected in February 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 20 to 22 March 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 28 February 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- All residential pupils make good progress and some make exceptional progress as a result of the support and care they receive in the residential setting.
- The voice of residential pupils is heard loud and clear. Leaders and managers are responsive to the ideas and suggestions that pupils make to improve the service.
- Young people enjoy a wide range of fun activities.
- Young people learn a wide range of key life-skills as a result of the residential experience. Staff have a keen focus on areas for social and emotional development for each residential pupil.
- There are close and effective links between the school and residential settings.
- Young people are healthy and receive the support they need to manage any health conditions.
- The physical environment is exceptional, and a highly skilled, well-resourced and dedicated premises team ensures that the building is safe and maintained to high standards.
- The food is delicious and nutritious.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care and support their children receive in residential care. They feel that it makes a significant difference to their progress in education, emotional well-being and improved life-skills.
- The residential staff develop positive relationships with young people. They display genuine warmth and affection towards them.
- Young people are generally well behaved and staff use a range of positive strategies to encourage young people to behave well.
- The young people feel safe and parents are happy that their children are 100% safe in the residential service.
- Dedicated health and therapeutic teams provide direction and support to ensure that young people get the support they need to promote their physical and emotional health needs.
- The designated safeguarding leads and key staff work effectively in partnership to ensure that young people are safe.
- A strong, experienced, leadership team provides safe hands and pays close attention to care practice.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Minor discrepancies in the school's central register were noted and gaps in employment have not been fully explored for all new starters.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that the single central register is updated to show the dates of Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all staff. Also keep a record to evidence that any employment gaps for new recruits have been explored.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Staff provide excellent individualised care for residential pupils. They build positive relationships and manage behaviour effectively. Residential pupils talk positively about staff and value the support they receive.

Young people also talk positively about the difference the residential experience makes to their lives. One young person remarked, 'It has turned my life around.' Another young person described how staff had helped him manage his behaviour and learn coping skills. He compared the school to his previous placement and said that he now engages in education and is doing really well. He went on to describe how he had managed a conflict situation in a work placement by talking it through. He felt that previously he would never have been able to do this.

Parents are equally positive about the quality of care provided and the positive difference the residential provision has made to their children. One parent said, 'Staff are absolutely excellent.' She said that staff provide 'a strong sense of care-giving in her absence'. She went on to say that, 'If I have to hand over care of my child to anyone, it would be to the staff here.' Another parent of a residential pupil spoke highly of the school and said that, 'The staff at Muntham House have been amazing and so supportive to our son and our family.' Parents consistently described positive outcomes, such as increased engagement in education, self-esteem, independence skills and making friends.

Staff know each child well; they receive detailed assessments from staff in the therapeutic team and use these to understand children's needs. Staff have a range of experts to consult with and, when more specialist help is needed, they commission external services to provide it.

The residential provision has a dedicated healthcare team. It provides excellent oversight of the way that health and well-being are promoted across the whole school. It produces detailed healthcare plans and these pay close attention to any health issues highlighted in residential pupils' education, health and care plans. Staff are trained to provide any additional support that residential pupils may need to manage any health conditions. The healthcare team closely monitors the administration of medications and this ensures that no errors occur and that residential pupils receive medications as prescribed.

Residential staff pay close attention to teaching residential pupils functional independence skills. Each residential pupil has clear targets. They are continually assessed and supported to ensure that they have the practical and social skills they need to thrive. Staff focus on the pupil's ability to build and sustain relationships, and to regulate their emotions and behaviour. They also identify the small steps each residential pupil needs to take to make progress in a range of practical skills, such as shopping and self-care. Most residential pupils make good progress and some make exceptional progress in these areas. This, for most, has a significant impact on their

future life chances and contributes to their sense of well-being and self-worth in the residential setting. All residential pupils get dedicated help and support to help them find a suitable education or work placement when leaving the school.

Residential pupils are supported to share their views in a number of ways. They contribute to their care plans, attend regular house meetings and they are strongly represented on the school-pupil council. It was impressive to see that residential pupils had contributed to a pupil-led 'Ofsted inspection'. They interviewed pupils and staff across the school. They made a number of positive comments about the strengths of the school and a number of recommendations as to how to improve the school and residential provision. The pupils' report concluded that 'relationships between students and staff are outstanding'. The senior leadership team is responsive to the ideas and suggestions that pupils make.

Young people participate in a range of positive and constructive activities. Feedback from residential pupils was mixed in this area. Some described the activities as the thing they liked best, others said they would like a wider range of off-site activities. Feedback from parents was generally positive about the activities on offer and their children's enjoyment of them. They particularly liked the extended welcome weekends, at which pupils across the whole school participate in on-site activities. Residential pupils benefit from the use of extensive school grounds and play areas. They also make good use of the school's sporting facilities and music studio.

The school has a dedicated facilities team which maintains the school premises. The facilities manager has keen oversight of all necessary checks in relation to potential hazards on the grounds and premises. The team quickly rectifies any faults and ensures that the residential environment is maintained to high standards and is safe.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Young people are safe. The residential pupils' own report on the quality of care provided across the school commented that, 'Muntham is a safe and accepting community and all young people feel safe.' Residential pupils reported that staff are quick to deal with any issues of bullying and that the pupils generally get on very well together.

The school and residential provision have a dedicated team of senior staff who oversee safeguarding. The designated safeguarding leads are experienced, well trained and take effective action in response to concerns or complaints.

The safeguarding team meets weekly to discuss any concerns or worries that staff may have about the well-being of pupils in the school. This team includes staff from the healthcare and therapeutics teams. This ensures that concerns are picked up quickly and appropriate support is put in place to keep pupils safe and happy.

The whole-school approach to safeguarding is systematic, well embedded and effective. The head of care attends all safeguarding forums. The school governor with responsibility for safeguarding also attends these regularly. This means that

leaders and managers of the whole school have a detailed understanding of the vulnerabilities and needs of all residential pupils.

Parents consistently report that they are absolutely confident that their children are safe in the residential provision.

Each residential pupil has a detailed, individual risk assessment. Staff are aware of any areas of vulnerability and actions needed to keep them safe and well. They provide close support and supervision to ensure that a safe environment is maintained. Staff have a proportionate response to managing risks and this ensures that young people are not 'wrapped in cotton wool'. They are allowed to take reasonable risks in order to develop their independence.

Risk assessments take account of the particular needs of the young people using the residential provision. If, for example, a young person has limited cognitive ability and finds it hard to understand or follow instructions, staff are aware and adjust their approach accordingly. All staff are currently undertaking significant, accredited training in order to better understand the needs of residential pupils who are assessed to be on the autistic spectrum. This ensures that they have a good understanding of how to understand the needs of residential pupils and how best to promote their safety and well-being.

Residential pupils are generally well behaved in both the school and residential provision. Over time, they learn how to improve their behaviour, regulate emotions and learn from mistakes. Physical intervention is rarely used and only employed as a last resort, for the least amount of time. Leaders and managers have excellent oversight of practice in this area. Each incident is recorded in detail and closely monitored to ensure that practice is safe. Staff undertake regular training in behaviour management. They are skilful at noticing problems at an early stage and managing situations to prevent serious incidents. The report by young people on the quality of care in residential provision noted that young people benefit from 'structure and routine'. On the whole, residential pupils feel that the rules are fair and they cooperate with staff in keeping good order.

The residential staff have recently introduced a behaviour points system to help young people improve their behaviours. Staff have high expectations and most young people respond well to this system. Some young people report feeling less positive and say that the system means that they miss out on some activities for what they see as small indiscretions. The head of care is aware of these concerns and will evaluate the points system to ensure that it is making a positive difference to behaviours and the residential experience.

Residential staff undertake regular safeguarding training in key areas of child protection. They are alive to potential risks that residential pupils may pose to each other and those posed in the wider community. Residential pupils are taught how to interact safely online and when using social media. Staff undertake training in relation to protecting pupils from radicalisation. All staff are trained in first aid and how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire.

Staff across the school communicate effectively to ensure that any concerns are shared. The school keeps detailed records of any concerns and reflects on practice to examine any opportunities for learning in the event of incidents, allegations and complaints. The leadership team encourages an open and transparent approach to managing concerns. If information needs to be shared with relevant external safeguarding agencies, this is done promptly. The designated officer for safeguarding commented that the school practises a sound, professional and effective partnership approach to safeguarding.

Senior staff have recently undertaken training in safe recruitment. All new staff are checked and vetted to ensure that they are suitable to work with vulnerable children and young people. The senior staff report that they check any employment gaps for job applicants, but these are not always consistently recorded. The single central register of the school was not updated to evidence that all checks had been updated for one member of the therapeutic team. Recruitment practice is generally robust and these shortfalls do not place young people at significant risk.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The senior leadership team provides effective direction across the whole school and has excellent oversight of care practice within the school. There are strong and effective links between school and residential, particularly in relation to safeguarding.

The headteacher of the school stated that, 'We are a community of purpose, which responds to the needs of young people's learning and behaviour.' This was seen to be true in practice. Residential staff and residential pupils talked positively about how feeling a part of the Muntham House community helped them feel supported and safe. This sense of community promotes an inclusive culture where difference is respected and diversity is promoted.

Residential staff feel supported by the head of care and the wider leadership team. They benefit from regular one-to-one supervision and weekly team meetings. They are encouraged to reflect on practice and share their ideas about how to improve the service. The managers and senior staff promote a strong, shared ethos that keeps the needs of each residential pupil at the heart of decision-making.

The leadership team advocates strongly within the professional network to ensure that care planning and provision meet individual needs. There were several examples where the school promptly provided additional resources when needed to help residential pupils. It did not allow discussions about funding to delay putting in this support, nor did it make extra provision subject to funding approval. This demonstrates an ethical approach to providing care and a positive 'can do' attitude to ensure that the school does the right thing for pupils.

The care manager and the leadership team promote an ambitious vision across the

whole school and have high expectations about what pupils can achieve. They closely monitor care practice and the outcomes for residential pupils. They listen to what young people say and understand how they are experiencing care and support. Managers evaluate the effectiveness of the residential service and use information from monitoring to drive continuous improvement.

The governing body of the school has excellent oversight of the progress and experiences of residential pupils. They regularly visit the residential pupils, talk to staff and pupils and review any incidents of concern. They feed back any areas for development and provide constructive challenge to the headteacher and the head of care. Governors take note of what residential pupils say and have made significant improvements to the residential service as a result. This includes refurbishing the sixth form residential flats and refurbishing the residential environment to provide a games room.

The leadership team has taken action in response to the recommendations for improvement at the previous inspection. It has reviewed policies in relation to administration of medication, and practice is now strong in this area. It has updated the school's CCTV policy and increased the frequency of fire drills. Monitoring reports of the residential provision are now undertaken more frequently and the quality of the reports has improved. The recording of actions taken in the event that young people go missing is now comprehensive and clear.

## **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. 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:** SC014636

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Richard Boyle

**Type of school:** residential special school

**Telephone number:** 01403 730 302

**Email address:** [principal@muntham.org.uk](mailto:principal@muntham.org.uk)

## **Inspector**

Lee Kirwin, 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 children looked after, 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018