

# Ripplevale School

Ripplevale School, Chapel Lane, Ripple, Deal, Kent CT14 8JG

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Ripplevale School is an independent special needs day and residential special school. It caters for a maximum of 80 boys, with 22 residential placements available. Boys who have an autistic spectrum diagnosis and who may also exhibit a range of emotional and/or social behavioural difficulties can join the school from the age of six to 18 years. The residential provision is managed by the principal, a team leader, and a team of care staff. At the time of this inspection, one boy was accommodated in one designated residential house on the main school site near Deal, Kent.

**Inspection dates:** 27 and 28 February 2018

**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 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:** 1 February 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The level of care and consideration afforded to the young people is exceptional.
- The young people make considerable progress from their starting points.
- Staff display noteworthy dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to the progress and well-being of the young people.
- A culture of care, sensitivity and safeguarding is evident across the whole provision.
- The standard of leadership throughout the provision is passionate, positive and visionary.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- To document and describe the model of residential care that has been developed over time, to provide a clear source of reference for future developments.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that policy documents relating to the residential provision include clear guidelines, processes and procedures for their implementation by staff.

## Inspection judgements

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

The residential provision provides a highly individualised 'home from home' experience for the young people.

High levels of communication and trust between the residential provision and parents/carers ensure a continuity of care and the means to reinforce and build on the gains made by the young people in both settings.

The young people are supported in making substantial progress in key areas that are most relevant to their transition into the adult world. Plans for this are thoughtful, sensitive and caring; progress is monitored and celebrated.

The young people are able to reflect on their progress and express appreciation for the way in which staff care for them. The young people develop strong feelings of attachment and belonging. As a result of the development of these strong connections, planned transitions by young people to more independent settings are emotionally challenging for everyone. Despite the sadness felt by staff and young people when young people move on, the process is managed well by staff.

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

A whole school approach is adopted for the care and protection of the young people. The safeguarding culture across both the school and the residential provision meets the standards normally associated with a good-quality children's home provision.

Standards in safeguarding training are high and a number of staff have been trained to a leadership level in this area. All teaching and care staff receive training in specialist areas such as exploitation, extremism and safe internet use.

Leaders respond quickly to any emerging trends of concern and will commission relevant training for all staff when necessary. A recent example of this was the rising incidence of self-harming behaviours. This resulted in a whole-school training programme to improve the understanding and skills of staff to manage this challenging area of practice.

The positive aspects of risk taking are understood by the staff team. Staff support young people to take risks that are appropriate to their development, that will prepare them for increasing independence and that will increase their ability to succeed in the adult world.

The high level of staff engagement with young people promotes a proactive and preventative approach to keeping them safe from hazards and risks, including those that they may pose to each other.

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

Leadership across the whole provision is of a high calibre and is characterised by vision, openness, flexibility and optimism. Management is dynamic; changing needs and circumstances are responded to in a positive and creative manner. This approach filters down to the leadership in the residential care provision where no limits are placed on improving the quality of care.

Leaders maintain strong links with external networks to ensure that the young people benefit from all the services that are available and that these services work together in a complementary way. The family liaison officer is a qualified social worker. This indicates the level of investment by leaders and managers in striving to provide the best possible service to the young people.

Leaders and managers across the service demonstrate a keen insight into the strengths and priority areas for improvement and further development. Succession plans are proactive and carefully considered and are driven by the maintenance of high standards and the ongoing development of the service.

The school has developed a very effective model of care, over time, for those placed in the boarding provision. Plans could include making this provision non-operational for a period. In order to ensure that the valuable knowledge and skills gained by care staff are not lost in the process, leaders and managers should ensure that this knowledge and expertise is included in relevant policies, procedures and guidance so that the model of care can be replicated by others in the future.

## **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:** SC023668

**Head teacher:** Sharon O'Connor

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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**Inspector:**

John Pledger, social care inspector



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