

Pencalenick Residential Special School

Pencalenick School, St. Clement, Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TE

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Pencalenick School is an academy providing for 121 children, aged from nine to 16 years, who have complex communication and learning disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder. Twenty-five children from the age of 11 up to the age of 16 years board at the school from Monday to Thursday. They may stay for up to four nights. The school is situated within a large country estate with extensive grounds, near the city of Truro. The boarding accommodation comprises parts of two floors in the main school building.

Inspection dates: 27 to 29 November 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of previous inspection: 12 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Children benefit from the boarding experience. Data analysis demonstrates that the boarding experience adds to developing children's emotional, social and independence skills. Feedback from boarders and their parents/guardians and other professionals is consistently positive.
- Boarders take part in a range of enjoyable and challenging activities. Many activities are designed to improve skills, develop strengths and promote achievements. This year, several children took part in the Ten Tors and Jubilee Challenge.
- Staff understand the diverse needs of boarders. Information is collected from a number of significant stakeholders in developing effective care plans. Detailed care planning and review ensures equality of access to development opportunities for boarders.
- Boarders are cared for by a consistent team of dedicated staff. All staff have a relevant childcare qualification. Staff retention is exemplary, contributing to boarders settling well and feeling safe in the boarding provision. Relationships between staff and boarders are mutually respectful.
- Behaviour management is focused on distraction, encouragement, praise and clear expectations. Arbitrary sanctions and rewards are avoided. Staff readily identify anxiety or difficulties in children and intervene quickly to avoid escalation of problems.
- Boarding provides opportunities for children to develop socially, particularly improving communication skills. Friendships form and children who are often otherwise isolated outside of school learn to share and play together. Boarders are tolerant of difference, support one another and appear happy.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Improve monitoring of the boarding provision by governors.
- Provide regular supervision to care staff.
- Ensure that independent visitor reports are provided to the school and governors in a timely way.

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:

- 20.3 Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the head teacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. Monitoring reports should be retained by the school and made available during an inspection.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 19.6 All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.

Recommendations

- Continue to refurbish the residential provision to develop a homely environment.
- Introduce planning records for children moving into boarding provision on a gradual basis.
- Ensure that any use of monitoring equipment is subject to risk assessment and regular review.
- Reinstate data collection which demonstrates the impact of boarding on boarders' achievements in the school setting.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The positive relationship between boarders and the care team is fundamental to the success of the boarding provision. Children feel valued and safe, which contributes to them settling quickly when they first spend time here. The atmosphere created by the staff is warm, friendly and welcoming.

Boarding provides beneficial care and support for children who consistently develop social, emotional and independence skills. Support is individualised following careful planning and discussion with a variety of professional stakeholders and parents. Parents are dependably impressed with the quality of care. They report feeling listened to and appreciate the additional support and opportunities afforded to their children.

Skills development for boarders is further enhanced by the opportunities to spend time with peers outside of school time, making friends, and being able to participate in a range of enjoyable activities. Some boarders have successfully taken part in the Jubilee Challenge, a trekking expedition on Dartmoor. Others enjoy climbing, activity centres and a range of sports. Community functions and events are popular with boarders and they make good use of local recreational facilities and the grounds of the school.

The quality of food provided remains reliably good. Several meals are cooked each day using fresh local ingredients. Specific food needs are catered for, children have a choice of meals and frequently request favourites which are added to the menu.

The school and boarding staff play their part alongside parents/carers in ensuring the health and welfare of children. Specialist services are available, and children are helped to understand and manage lifelong conditions. Several children access speech and language therapy, social work services and child and adolescent mental health services.

The support provided to children who board contributes to them preparing for adulthood. Although many will need lifelong support, they leave having developed self-care and self-help skills, and significantly, the confidence to spend overnight away from parents/full-time carers.

Written plans have not been provided to children who are on a gradual introduction to the boarding provision. These could help both children and parents to understand aims and progress towards boarding.

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

Boarders are safe and feel safe in this environment. They can readily express any concerns or anxieties, knowing that staff will respond effectively and quickly. Children trust the staff to take good care of them.

Risks are well understood and managed by the boarding staff. Children can take on a range of age-appropriate and exciting activities with effective supervision and guidance.

Behaviour management is based on understanding boarders' needs, their communication methods and triggers to difficulties. These are well documented in care plans and known to the staff team. Clear boundaries and expectations for positive behaviour are in place and these values characterise the boarding provision. The use of physical intervention does not feature in managing behaviour. Sanctions and rewards are no longer used as these are felt to have been ineffective and arbitrary on occasion. Staff model caring, inclusive and respectful relationships with children, and the supervision of children is such that incidents of bullying are rare. Borders have not gone missing from this provision.

All staff are trained in safeguarding children and receive regular updates. Effective measures have been taken to safeguard children and deal appropriately with issues that affect their safety and welfare. There are useful and supportive links in place with other agencies involved in the protection of children.

A camera system which monitors one of the landings during the night is not risk-assessed to ensure that it continues to be needed to keep boarders safe.

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

Monitoring of the boarding provision by governors is not robust. Governors have not visited the residential provision and spoken to boarders or observed the practice of staff. In addition, there is significant delay in the independent visitor providing reports to the school and governors following visits to the boarding provision. As a result, the boarding provision lacks the benefit of an appropriate level of independent scrutiny and monitoring.

While there has been an improvement in the frequency of formal supervision provided to the head of care, supervision for care staff has not been provided on a regular basis.

The head of care, deputy and care staff are a significant asset to the school. They are instrumental to the success of the boarding provision and the progress of students. The staff team is stable, all members are qualified and are in receipt of both essential and specific training to meet the needs of the children they care for.

Leaders and managers are aware of most of the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. A development plan is in place. Staff are further enthused by the appointment of a new headteacher who brings a wealth of experience, new ideas and a passion equal to that of the care team, for making the most of the boarding provision.

Boarders benefit from continuing investment in the boarding provision. New showers have been installed and all the water storage and pipework had been upgraded. A new wet room is nearing completion and further plans involve creating more single-occupancy bedrooms. This listed building offers some challenge in keeping up to date with decoration and refurbishment. However, the benefits of the extensive grounds and beauty of the surrounding area compensate for some of this.

Listening to children and taking account of their views is a well-established feature of both the school and boarding provision. The boarding provision has an allocated representative who records the feelings and wishes of his peers and reports these back to the head of care. As a result, changes have been made to decor, menus and activities.

Progress for boarders is well documented and analysed to demonstrate achievements and inform further planning. All boarders achieve a level of independence skills, particularly in self-care. The advantages of boarding are such that all school attenders will be offered the chance to spend time in the boarding provision and those in the last year of school will be targeted for boarding so that they have more opportunities to develop independence skills.

The school is awaiting the introduction of a new electronic data collection system. This will reinstate collection of evidence which demonstrates the positive impact of boarding on school attainment.

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: SC041223

Headteacher: Ruth Zimmerman

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Inspector

Janice Hawtin, social care inspector (lead)



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