

Marland School

Devon County Council, Marland School, Peters Marland, Torrington, Devon EX38 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Marland School is a local authority maintained school. It is a member of a foundation trust with other special schools within the local authority. Marland School provides weekly residential care, over four nights, for up to 40 boys between the ages of 10 and 16 years. The school provides education and care for boys who have social, emotional and mental health needs. At the time of this inspection there were 32 children on roll.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 December 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 22 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Children are looked after by a stable, well-trained staff team. As a result, they make steady progress in all areas and form trusting and loving relationships.
- Staff are supported by experienced and knowledgeable leaders and managers who are committed to improving the outcomes of the children.
- A well-structured leadership team drives change and advocates for developments extremely well. An example of this is the construction of a purpose-built residential accommodation that provides children with space and opportunities to further develop independence skills.
- Leaders, managers and staff know the children very well. They provide an environment that is nurturing, safe and welcoming, where children thrive. Parents and carers spoke highly of the progress and safe care of their children.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- When searches of children's belongings take place, they are not in line with policy and procedure, and records kept do not evidence clearly the reason the search has taken place.
- Reporting of safeguarding concerns is not, in every case, prompt and does not accord with protocol.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure 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. (Residential Special School National Minimum Standards 11.1)

- Any search of boarders' personal belongings should be carried out in accordance with section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996 and with regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Residential Special School National Minimum Standards 9.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress in all areas. They benefit from a safe and supportive environment where courtesy and respect for others are promoted.

It is a real strength of the school that so many staff have a pastoral concern for the children, both formal and informal. Children, carers and parents commented favourably on their positive relationships with staff, and the availability of different staff to help them if they have problems. Parents told inspectors that they 'couldn't praise the school highly enough', and the progress their children have made since starting is 'impressive'.

Staff and children form positive relationships and feel secure. When children do raise worries or complaints they say they are addressed quickly and positively.

Children are supported well to prepare for their moves towards independence. A wide variety of planned activities and learning support complements the children's academic studies. Examples of learning include safe use of the internet, healthy eating, substance misuse and issues in relation to bullying, gender and sexuality.

All staff place a strong emphasis on consultation and inclusion of children. This means children are kept central to decision-making. School counsel, daily meetings and regular visits from an independent listener provide forums where children's voices are heard.

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

Children said that they feel safe and that this is due to many factors, for example knowing there are staff they can talk to and knowing that the building is safe. Parents and social workers also told inspectors that they feel confident that children are kept safe.

Children live in an environment that provides good physical safety. For example, they have their own accommodation, secured by their own personal fob entry key, and systems are in place to protect them from safety hazards. This safety is demonstrated through the routine use of policies and procedures, which are reviewed as circumstances change. All equipment used is regularly checked and serviced to ensure that it is safe. Good assessment systems are in place for on-site and off-site activities and organised trips. In addition, children know and understand how to use the recreational areas safely, both indoors and outdoors.

Staff have a good understanding of the children's therapeutic needs. Collaborative

working with social workers and qualified Thrive practitioners results in behaviour and care plans that are informed by current research. Structured and personalised responses mean that challenging behaviours are reducing significantly. Children are gradually learning how to manage their anxieties and worries.

Children rarely go missing from the home. If this does happen, staff are proactive in their responses. They follow each child's missing-from-home protocol and report to all relevant agencies in a timely manner.

Complaints and serious incidents involving children and staff are responded to quickly, and comprehensive detailed records are kept. Inspectors found that the designated safeguarding leads were not always following protocol by liaising with the local area designated officer prior to undertaking an investigation. However, there is no evidence of this failing having an adverse impact on the children and staff and any subsequent investigation.

Inspectors found staff performing routine searches of children's personal belongings when they return to school after being at home. A strategy adopted by staff to reduce risk is not fair or lawful as there was insufficient evidence of how children give consent, and neither do the records provide an explicit rationale for each search.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management of the residential school are good. Care of the children is well organised, and the senior management team is ably led by the head of the school. Strong leadership and management lead to a committed group of staff who understand the aims and ethos of the school, and the roles and areas of responsibility of members of staff. The head of school and the head of care have a hands-on management approach, and both have a very visible presence in the residential accommodation. Staff, social workers, parents and carers spoke extremely positively of the leaders and managers.

Leaders and managers are well established in their roles and, by continuing with their professional development, they remain up to date with research and practice. Since the last inspection they have driven improvements, resulting in positive outcomes for children. Advocating for additional funds for new accommodation has resulted in children living in a much improved residential special school that provides them with better opportunities to grow and develop.

All staff contribute to the improvement of the school. Effective use is made of stakeholders' and parents' feedback, and children's views are valued and proactively sought. Regular children satisfaction surveys and children's council meetings are an integral part of school life, and this helps to shape the development of the residential provision.

Monitoring and reviewing of the school, coupled with rigorous scrutiny by the independent visitor and the governing body, take place regularly. Well-written

reports are presented at local authority meetings, demonstrating that children are helped and supported to share their views, and that challenge takes place when necessary.

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: SC022231

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Keith Bennett

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector(s)

Linda Bond, social care inspector (lead)



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