

# Stone Bay School

Stone Bay Special School, 70 Stone Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 1EB

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Stone Bay School is a local authority maintained residential special school. There are currently 59 girls and boys attending, of which 17 are weekly boarders. The school caters for young people who have learning, behavioural and communication needs. A high percentage of students have autism spectrum disorders. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

**Inspection dates:** 21 to 23 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 **good**

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

**Date of previous inspection:** 13 March 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Leaders and managers provide strong leadership to the stable staff team.
- Children develop good relationships with staff and each other. They enjoy opportunities to develop academically, socially and emotionally.
- Children's progress is tracked to evidence positive outcomes. Functional behaviour analysis informs care plans and risk assessments.
- The impact of speech and language therapist assessments increases staff's knowledge of communication, together with bespoke training. The staff use a range of communication methods and tools.
- Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Well-planned arrangements for children to move on from the home mean that children settle into new provisions well.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Delays in actions agreed during internal reviews were not acted on.
- Not all staff are offered debriefs after each incident of physical intervention.
- Not all staff have the level 3 qualification or are enrolled on the course.
- Restrictive practices have not been reviewed.

## **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:

- 6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 12.5 All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by.
- 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 3 months of confirmation of employment.

### **Recommendations**

- 12.3 Staff receive appropriate training and support to recognise and deal with incidences of challenging behaviour or bullying, particularly in relation to reviewing restrictive practice.

## Inspection judgements

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

The moving-in procedures are very effective and result in children settling in and making positive relationships. The assessment process is rigorous, involving a range of external professionals and internal staff, to ensure that only pupils who will benefit from the specialist services attend the school. The role of the family liaison worker, who works closely with families, enhances this process. Staff meet the pupils and their parents prior to them moving in. They receive welcome packs, and social stories are used to help children and parents to know what to expect.

Staff know each child well and they implement strategies to promote positive outcomes for children. Targets are measured using 'Performance Indicators for Value Added Targets'. Initial baseline assessments are tracked across a range of areas to demonstrate children's progress.

Children flourish because of the supportive, nurturing and individualised support they receive from the staff, who work in close collaboration across the school. Some staff work in both the school and residential provision, providing continuity for children. Effective sharing of information between the two settings ensures that there are consistent responses to challenging behaviour. Children attain good academic results. All children in the residential provision have reached their expected levels and some have exceeded expectations.

Developing children's communication and social skills is paramount. Staff use each child's communication methods, such as signing or picture exchange methods. Staff contribute to speech and language therapist assessments by providing evidence about when children are ready to move to another stage in their communication. Appropriately challenging programmes are devised for the children as required.

Children enjoy their stays and they are enthusiastic participants in activities held within the residential service, school grounds and the local community. This is a 'happy' school, with staff and children enjoying each other's company. Inter-school competition encourages children to participate fully in planned activities.

An initiative to include day pupils in tea visits at the residential provision has been an initial success. Two day-school children joined their peers in the evening, extending friendships into the residential provision. Children are fully involved in choosing equipment for a common room for day-school and residential students to share.

Children's health needs are afforded a high priority. Staff support children's health appointments using social stories. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their health needs if they are able to. One child is now able to self-administer injections with supervision by staff.

Staff help children to develop life skills and increase their independence. Staff teach valuable social skills such as table manners. The use of timers means that children learn to wait and eat together, and mealtimes are much calmer. Children visit the local shops to learn about money and budgeting. The kitchen in the common room is used to give children the opportunity to prepare food and cook communally.

Children who move on from the school are supported with social stories and sensitive discussions with staff. Where possible, staff take children to their new homes to help them to settle in. Staff share essential information regarding care plans and children's needs. Recent moves have been positive for children.

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

Experienced designated safeguarding leads manage any safeguarding concerns. Appropriate referrals are made to external safeguarding agencies. Fortnightly meetings of the safeguarding team consider the welfare issues that have been referred to them. An internal review was undertaken in consultation with the designated officer. However, the actions identified have not been responded to.

Staff risk-assess the changing needs of children daily. Any new activities are visited and assessed for their safety prior to the children attending the event. Reflections on the success of an activity inform future risk assessments.

Behaviour is monitored effectively across the school. The behaviour team regularly reviews incidents, identifying any trends and patterns. The information gathered is used to provide evidence to professionals to formulate children's care plans. Staff have been able to use this evidence to advocate against a child being admitted to hospital for assessment. They were able to demonstrate that her issues were due to too many transitions and, as a result, a 52-week school placement was identified.

The school works in partnership with external professionals. A 'distress passport' was completed by all staff working with a child. Valuable information was gathered about the child's responses when in crisis. The increased shared knowledge about how the child presents when happy and relaxed has increased staff's confidence in interacting with him. He is less socially isolated now and recently joined the other children at a disco, a big step for him.

Generally, the ethos is to look at children's behaviour and make appropriate adjustments to behaviour plans to ensure that children learn to manage their emotions. However, there have been times when more restrictive practices such as removable taps and limiting shower outputs are used. These practices need to be reviewed regularly to reduce the need for such interventions.

Behaviour management techniques, used to identify triggers and to ensure that staff have strategies to manage difficult behaviour, have effectively reduced the level of positive handling interventions. Staff discuss children's behaviour at handovers with school staff and at team meetings and implement strategies that work. Staff ensure

that children's views are recorded. Staff briefings take place after serious incidents. However, this practice is not embedded. This is a missed opportunity to learn from incidents where staff interventions have used de-escalation techniques effectively.

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

Leaders and managers demonstrate a good knowledge of the residential pupils' needs. They speak of the achievements and progress of children with pride. Senior staff role-model confident and sensitive approaches with the children, and children respond positively. Leaders and managers work directly with the children and are on-call for staff to contact if necessary. This close working with staff means that staff appreciate the managers and staff morale is high. Staff said that they appreciate the support from their managers when they are struggling with work-related or external issues. A staff member said, 'The support from managers is amazing, I wouldn't still be working here if it wasn't for their support.'

Leaders and managers network effectively. Good links with the schools in the local area mean that staff share resources and ideas and are supported well by the school community. Staff discuss more complex incidents within this group. A more formal formalisation of this external audit would ensure independent reviews of these incidents.

Managers liaise effectively with parents to engage them in their child's care and to ensure that the support that staff provide to children addresses the behaviours the parents would like to change. A parent said, 'I couldn't ask for things to be better.' Another parent reported, 'My son said, "Thank you Mummy, it's the best school ever."' Social workers commend the good relationships that staff develop with parents and the positive outcomes that children experience.

Recruitment and induction processes are safe and effective. A permanent member of staff who recently joined the team has settled in well. Staff report high levels of support and supervision and regular appraisals. A training week involving all staff is effective in ensuring uniformity of training. A recent team day was successful in bringing the whole school team together to bond and work together for the benefit of the children.

Most staff have an appropriate qualification and those who do not are currently enrolled on or are completing the level 3 diploma. Two part-time staff do not have this qualification and are not enrolled on the course. The experience of these staff is not consistent with the rest of the team. The manager is consulting with external trainers to address this issue.

There are established systems for monitoring the quality of care being provided. Reports are produced by the governing body who, while new to the role, are experienced governors and safeguarding professionals. An independent visitor visits regularly, interacts with the children and provides a detailed report on the residential provision.

## **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:** SC023693

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Paula Miller

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01843 863421

**Email address:** pmiller@stone-bay.kent.sch.uk



## **Inspector**

Suzy Lemmy, social care inspector (lead)



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