

child

Sunnydown School

Sunnydown School, Whyteleafe Road, Caterham, Surrey CR3 5ED

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a residential and day school for boys aged 11 to 16 who have communication and interaction difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan and a number have social communication disorders. The school currently has 84 pupils in total and 31 of these board at the school for up to four nights a week each.

The boarding accommodation is on the first floor of a teaching building and has a semi-independent wing for older residential pupils. The school is situated in a residential area in Caterham.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 February 2019

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

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

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: 20 February 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- pupils settle quickly and make very good progress
- boarding is a valued and integral part of the school's operation
- leaders and managers are inspirational and they have created a collaborative team that focuses on holistically meeting pupils' needs
- the staff understand pupils' needs very well and meet these effectively
- staff consistently and rigorously share the accountability for safeguarding and protecting pupils
- systems support the staff to identify, monitor and act well on welfare and safeguarding concerns.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- ensuring that recruitment procedures are carefully followed
- ensure that staff are clearer about when to escalate safeguarding concerns.

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 for residential special schools:

- Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (national minimum standard 14.1)

In particular, leaders and managers must monitor that recruitment procedures consistently follow good practice guidelines.

Recommendation

- Ensure that leaders and managers consistently use the local authority's formal escalation procedures for safeguarding concerns.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The experiences and opportunities offered at the school holistically improve the long- and short-term progress that pupils make. Pupils settle well and say that they enjoy boarding. One pupil said, 'It's like my home.'

A whole-school approach to improving pupils' life chances permeates everything that happens here. For example, the headteacher gives talks on autism to increase employers' openness to offering employment opportunities. Pupils opportunities to socialise in the community are well organised and diverse. The care provided helps pupils to:

- extend their experiences and be aspirational for their futures
- manage social situations and develop friendships, within and outside of the school
- increase their sense of belonging to a community
- become more independent
- learn skills which prepare them for higher education, employment and apprenticeships and lastly,
- have fun.

Pupils' needs are understood and planned for well. One parent said that the difference in her child since he came here last year 'is phenomenal' and 'he is a much happier child'. Another parent said that she could not quite believe that the son who came here five years ago is doing GCSEs and is going to the college of his choice later this year. They both attributed their child's improvement to the support that boarding staff had given.

The residential staff's relationships with pupils positively contribute to pupils' progress. Staff have a good understanding of how to help pupils gradually make small changes that have big effects on their lives. One parent said that the main attribute that she appreciated was 'their persistence and patience in gradually helping her child', which had resulted in real change.

Pupils' health needs are identified well and supported effectively. There are robust procedures in place to manage medication, which are monitored well. The emotional support available is varied and thoughtful. Such opportunities range from sitting with a pet when distressed to having regular therapy sessions provided by the school therapist. Staff find bespoke strategies to help pupils manage and to reduce their anxieties effectively. The school received feedback from a parent who said how well a strategy helped her son to deal with a stressful situation at home.

Pupils' views are respected and valued. They learn to negotiate and respond

constructively to views which differ from their own in a supportive environment. All decisions that the staff make clearly take into consideration a pupil's views and involve them. Opportunities to discuss issues are provided frequently.

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

Safeguarding pupils is a high priority for all staff who work together well if a safeguarding concern arises. Pupils say that they feel safe at the school and that they can keep themselves safer because of staff support.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely well. There are very few incidents where measures of control are needed, and no pupils go missing. Staff are very attuned to individual pupils' needs and attentively try to reduce the likelihood that behaviours escalate. Pupils say that arguments between them are quickly resolved and rare.

Excellent systems support the staff to quickly identify, log and act on welfare concerns. Patterns and trends in pupils' behaviours are monitored well and result in strategic and individual support, which helps pupils and their families. There are clear procedures about when such concerns should be referred as safeguarding concerns.

Staff understand and appropriately refer safeguarding concerns to safeguarding agencies. On one occasion, senior staff should have used a local authority's escalation procedures more quickly. Their concerns were logged with the social work team, but they did not use the local authority's formal escalation procedures. However, staff clearly used escalation procedures to obtain early help for families when necessary.

Risks are identified, understood and managed very well. The headteacher provides strong leadership about what he expects the staff to do to minimise and manage any risks that are identified. There are further changes planned with regards to risk management, which are yet to be fully embedded. The leadership team is confident that these changes will lead to further improvements.

The staff take account of changes for a pupil, including those in society. For example, staff were helping pupils to understand the risks relating to knife crime. They were approaching this issue sensitively, balancing the pupils' need to understand the increased risk with managing the pupils' potential anxieties because of their increased understanding of this issue.

Recruitment generally meets required standards. However, in one instance, a recruitment record contained one reference. The other reference had been requested but not received before the member of staff took up their employment.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are inspirational. They continually look to improve services and care, using current affairs, theory and research to inform the improvements which they propose.

Innovative practice is evident across the school. Last year a fast food van was refurbished. Pupils were undertaking food hygiene courses at the time of inspection, so that they can work in the van at local events. An administrator was key to developing the newly introduced online safeguarding recording system. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has created and implemented a measuring tool to track how each pupil is developing their resilience to recover from adverse circumstances.

There are comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programmes. Data and analysis are used well to evaluate the care and support which they provide and to decide areas for improvement and innovation. Managers have a clear understanding of how to embed change and do so successfully. This results in a staff team whose members work together well, whose members are inquisitive and reflective and whose members put pupils' needs at the centre of their practice.

Boarding is an integral part of the school, which is appreciated and valued. Feedback received during the inspection on Ofsted's online questionnaire system Parent View demonstrated how highly parents praise the difference that this school makes for their child and their family.

The quality of staff supervision, appraisal and training is very good. These reflect issues which help the staff to understand the best ways of supporting and protecting pupils. Opportunities for staff growth are both formal and informal. Several staff were leading projects which increased their engagement, commitment and interest in their roles while developing and improving services.

The staff build and maintain appropriate relationships with other professionals across a broad range of professions. These links help leaders and managers to develop and monitor what boarding offers and to take account of other professionals' ideas.

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: SC013896

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Paul Jensen

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Inspector

Ruth Coler, social care inspector



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