

St Dominic's School

Hambledon, Godalming, Surrey GU8 4DX

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school has been registered as an academy since January 2018. It is set in large, picturesque grounds within a small rural community. Weekly boarding is available for children aged between seven and 19 years old. Nine children are using the residential provision. While other accommodation is available, currently all children stay in one of the residential homes. There is currently an open consultation regarding the future of the residential provision with a proposal to close in July 2020.

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	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: 6 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Leaders, managers and staff consistently provide children and young people with outstanding care and experiences.
- Children and young people make exceptional progress. Leaders and managers have a strong depth of understanding about the needs of each child and young person and how to support them to achieve their targets.
- Extremely positive relationships are formed between children, young people and staff. Staff know children and young people exceptionally well. These relationships contribute to the positive experiences children have in the residential provision.
- Highly skilled and knowledgeable staff use research to deliver well-thought-out, evidence-based models of care and education.
- Children feel safe. Effective safeguarding monitoring and review systems implemented by leaders and managers work exceptionally well to promote the welfare of children and minimise risk.
- Leaders and managers successfully create a culture of high aspirations and expectations for children and young people. Staff are dedicated to providing the highest quality of care and education to children and young people.
- Creative and innovative ideas from leaders and managers come to fruition and have a positive impact on children and young people's lives. Some of this exceptional practice is disseminated in other residential special schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children and young people make exceptional progress from their starting points. Leaders and managers effectively promote a highly aspirational ethos with high expectations of achievement.

The integration of care, therapy and education within the school is a strength. Children and young people benefit from the highly cohesive wraparound team. Care staff have an exceptional understanding of children and young people's targets and goals. The care that children and young people receive is well planned, which helps them to progress and, in many cases, exceed beyond their goals.

Leaders and managers have created, and successfully embedded, an innovative electronic programme which tracks children and young people's progress. The programme's accessible design enables it to become integrated in practice and useable for children, young people, staff, families and professionals. Staff use this programme effectively to inform the care that they provide to children and young people.

Research is regularly used to inform practice. Staff have an excellent knowledge of research, and this is used to inform the care and support that they provide to children and young people.

Children and young people benefit from staying in residential provision during the week and their evenings are full of interesting things to do. Visits to the cinema, coffee shops and the sports centre are frequent. In addition, children and young people undertake work experience, attend clubs in the community and go on trips abroad. These positive experiences are valuable and promote the children and young people's social development.

Families speak highly of their children's experiences at the school and the positive impact it has on their development. One family member said, 'He is very fortunate to be at this school. He has come a long way. [Staff] go the extra mile and understand him.'

Children and young people have confidence to express their views and be heard. Staff spend time with, and listen to, children and young people, and relationships between them all are strong. Other avenues of consultation include the student voice group, independent listener or link worker. An example of change as a result of listening to children and young people is the evening meal in the home. Food is now bought from a supermarket and the evening meal is cooked in the home, when before it was commercially catered.

Staff show a high level of commitment to children and young people. The outstanding integration of the care, therapy and school teams means that they respond swiftly to review, and revise, children and young people's plans as required.

This way of working enables children and young people to succeed.

Plans about moving on are devised when the children are in year nine and are well integrated into the overall care plan. Staff have exceptional knowledge about children and what they need to move on successfully. The commitment and drive to be flexible around the needs of children and young people to enable them to move on positively is worthy of wider dissemination.

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

Safeguarding is highly effective. Staff understand their responsibilities to protect children and young people exceptionally well. Leaders and managers take effective action to manage child protection concerns. Relationships with safeguarding professionals such as early help, the multi-agency safeguarding hub and the designated officer are strong.

Highly effective planning helps to minimise potential risks to children and young people. The approach to risk is proportionate and considered on an individual needs-led basis. Safety plans and risk assessments clearly define how staff are to keep children and young people safe.

Leaders and managers keep themselves and their team up to date with the most recent research and statutory guidance about keeping children safe. For example, the local 'Prevent' officer has close links with the school to deliver support and guidance to children, young people and their families.

Leaders and managers' oversight of safeguarding is a strength which significantly reduces the risk of drift. Weekly safeguarding meetings are important in upholding outstanding safeguarding practice. Leaders hold each other, and other safeguarding services, to account effectively to ensure that all actions are completed and that child protection processes are concluded.

Children and young people enjoy their residential experiences, and their behaviour is good. Praise, rewards and token systems encourage children and young people's positive behaviour. While restraint has not occurred in the residential provision, some children and young people who stay in the residential provision have been restrained in school. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of why this occurs.

A dedicated behaviour support team is available throughout the school day to support children and young people. Children and young people write their own behaviour support strategies, so that these are matched to their needs. This practice is highly effective in supporting children with the least intervention possible. The behaviour team leads debriefs at the end of each day, giving staff the opportunity to reflect and learn.

There has been one missing from school incident since the previous inspection. Staff took effective action to implement the missing from school protocol. Following the occurrence, staff spent time with the child to understand the cause and develop

strategies to reduce the risk of it occurring again. The child has not gone missing from school since.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are inspirational, ambitious and have high expectations and standards for children and young people.

The senior leadership team comprises of highly skilled practitioners who are becoming leaders in their field. Sharing good practice is common within the wider organisation and other schools within the trust. The use of research to inform and improve practice is embedded in the culture of the school.

Leaders and managers have innovative and creative ways that help children and young people to progress and achieve. The electronic programme as detailed above is a noteworthy example of something they created having a positive impact on practice. Leaders have presented this programme at a national level and some schools within the trust have been trained by the team and are already using the programme.

Individual needs of children and young people are prioritised exceptionally well. Leaders and managers have a high level of understanding about children and young people's progress. This is reviewed regularly and, when necessary, quick changes are made to enable children to achieve.

A highly effective development plan addresses weaknesses. The strengths of the school are well understood and disseminated within the wider organisation. An effective and committed governance team offers external scrutiny and holds leaders and managers to account.

Children and young people receive high-quality and consistent care from staff who are dedicated and passionate. Staff feel supported and have many opportunities for supervision and reflection. All staff have their own individual targets for their personal development.

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: SC013937

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Angela Drayton

Type of school: Residential Special School

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Inspector

Nicola Lownds, social care inspector



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