

Northeast Manor School

Northeast Manor School, Newhaven Road, Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 3EY
Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Northeast Manor is a co-educational, independent day and weekly residential special school for children aged between 10 and 17 years who have autism spectrum disorder and/or dyslexia. The school offers flexible boarding arrangements. The residential accommodation is provided in two separate boarding houses for up to 30 residential pupils. At the time of this inspection, one boarding house was operational because of low occupancy by boys only. The school is located near to Lewes, East Sussex.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 January 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 14 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school requires improvement to be good because:

- The quality of care planning guidance is variable. Some residential pupils have clear plans and targets but others do not.
- Risk assessments for individual residential pupils and for activities are not consistently developed, signed off by senior leaders or implemented by staff.
- There is no clear development planning for the residential provision. This impedes the leaders' desired growth and expansion of the residential provision.
- Enrichment and extra-curricular activities lack creativity and variety. Residential pupils have become bored and have outgrown what is on offer during residential time.
- Specialist support, such as occupational, speech and language therapies, are not fully integrated into the residential provision.
- Governor reports of the residential provision lack scrutiny. The residential provision is not sufficiently challenged to improve.
- Additional training and guidance are required by the governing body to ensure that all members are able to fulfil their safeguarding duties and responsibilities.

The residential special school's strengths are:

- Residential pupils are happy and enjoy positive relationships with the staff and each other.
- Individual differences are celebrated. Residential pupils feel valued.

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 standards for residential special schools:

- 11.1 The school ensures 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.
- 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.
- 13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.5 The school's leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Recommendations

- Profiles of the residential pupils should contain information relevant to the residential provision, as well as the classroom. This information should include a recent photograph that accurately reflects the individual's current appearance.
- Carry out a thorough risk assessment of the wider estate and premises that results in clear strategies being developed to reduce the identified risks.
- Conduct a full and detailed review of a recent safeguarding incident. Use the findings to identify lessons learned and to develop future policy and practice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The current low occupancy, combined with recent staff changes, has hindered the intentions of senior leaders to grow and develop the residential provision. The majority of the residential pupils have accessed this service for a long period. They feel safe, they trust the routines and they know the environment well. For some residential pupils, these factors contribute to feelings of boredom and a sense of having outgrown the narrow range of activities and experiences provided.

The variable quality of care planning practice results in missed opportunities to fully utilise all that the residential provision has the potential to offer. The wider school premises and resources are potentially accessible during residential time, combined with suitably equipped living areas. These resources are underused and a missed opportunity for residential pupils to develop and practise independent living skills, for example.

A strong admissions process is not always followed by the same good practice of longer-term care planning. The focuses of goals and targets are predominantly education-based and during the school day, as is the input from the therapy teams. Individual therapy passports focus solely on the classroom setting. As a result, there are missed opportunities for the residential pupils to be supported to make progress in residential time. One residential pupil has no care plan for the residential element. Consequently, the value and impact of the residential provision are not being adequately measured and his progress is not captured.

Admissions to boarding are carefully planned. Individual needs are fully considered, with introductions planned in line with the residential pupil's input. Adaptable plans have enabled some residential pupils to take breaks from the residential element, to enable their complex needs to be met, and then return. There is a strong commitment to achieving stability and permanence until school-leaving age.

Regular reviews of education, health and care plans ensure that the residential pupils' identified needs are being met. However, the absence of residential staff during these meetings further demonstrates the lack of a holistic and inclusive review. This is another missed opportunity that devalues the input of the residential provision.

Despite recent staff changes, all residential pupils confidently speak about a number of staff members that they trust and can go to for help. Observations were made of many positive interactions and warm relationships during this inspection.

Residential pupils describe an accepting culture at this school. They can explore their identity in a supportive climate. Bullying is rare. Residential pupils describe a zero-

tolerance approach where staff intervene quickly. As a result, diversity is accepted and celebrated.

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

Staff's understanding and implementation of risk assessments and strategies are inconsistent. One serious incident resulted in pupils being left unsupervised by staff during off-site activities. The initial investigation and management of this incident were satisfactory, however weaknesses in the understanding and implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures by the governing body have undermined the schools safeguarding approach.

Other aspects of safeguarding arrangements are being strengthened. Staff across all departments are becoming conversant with electronic recording systems. This enables concerns about pupils to be communicated quickly with those who need to know. In one example, the designated safeguarding lead rigorously pursued external safeguarding professionals to investigate concerns about a third party.

Updates on statutory guidance are shared effectively with all staff by the designated safeguarding lead and whole-school safeguarding training correctly focuses on the specific vulnerabilities of the pupils. A new venture, 'The Youth Leadership Programme', is ready for implementation, with a primary focus of pupils increasing their own understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Recruitment practice is sound. Statutory checks on all adults with a role in the school are completed prior to the commencement of employment and the single central register is appropriately maintained and monitored.

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

The headteacher has been in post since January 2017. She is passionate about developing the school and has a good grasp of the current strengths and weaknesses. She is working through the numerous areas of focus; however, a clear and focused plan for the residential provision is not yet complete.

A new head of care has been appointed and is due to take up the position in a few weeks. The absence of a clear residential strategy risks further delays for this person in progressing the necessary improvements.

Policies regarding the investigation and management of a serious incident have not been widely understood or implemented effectively by governors. This has undermined the safeguarding culture at the school. Leaders and managers have begun to identify learning from this, but have not yet undertaken a full review.

Governance at the school has areas of weakness. Not all current governors have been available to undertake their allocated monitoring visits. Records of these visits are weak. They do not identify significant issues and are not currently providing a rigorous and reflective account to support the development of the school. Leaders and managers are in the process of increasing the governance of the school to expand and develop the breadth of professional knowledge among the board members. The chair of governors and the headteacher are clear regarding their plans to strengthen school governance.

Significant progress has been made by senior leaders in tackling the most pressing issues that were affecting the school. Decisive action has been taken with regard to senior positions and improved arrangements have strengthened the financial viability of the school.

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: SC050107

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Claire Farmer

Type of school: residential special school

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Inspectors

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