

# Muntham House School

Muntham House School, Barns Green, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0NJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

The school is a non-maintained residential special school for up to 56 boys aged between eight and 19 years, of whom 48 may be boarders. At this inspection there were 24 residential pupils. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. It is a designated school for pupils who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties and who may in addition have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autistic spectrum disorder. The school buildings are set in extensive grounds of 20 acres. Accommodation is located in the main building with a separate building for the Extended Education Unit.

**Inspection dates:** 29 to 31 January 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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 March 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Residential pupils make excellent progress, especially when bearing in mind their starting points.
- Residential pupils enjoy their boarding experience and benefit from the excellent, caring relationships they develop with both staff and peers.
- Difference and diversity are enjoyed and celebrated and there is a strong culture of tolerance and respect.
- Residential pupils have access to a variety of therapies which can help them understand their feelings and behaviours.
- The quality of food is excellent, varied and nutritious.
- Clear routines and structure provide safety and consistency for residential pupils.
- Residential pupils speak of their school as a caring, safe community.
- The management and staff team are stable and experienced. They have excellent insight and understanding of each residential pupil's needs.

The residential special school's areas for development:

- Consider ways of raising residential pupils' awareness of their individual targets.
- Improve the detail in some risk assessments so that strategies to support some residential pupils are clearer to staff.

## Inspection judgements

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

Residential pupils benefit greatly from living at this school. Feedback from them about the positive impact on their lives is overwhelmingly favourable. 'I have friends now, I'm not so isolated,' said one residential pupil. 'I wouldn't be at school, most probably be in a lot of trouble, if I wasn't here,' said another. This school has a massive and life-changing impact on residential pupils' lives.

Residential pupils thrive on the warm, supportive relationships with the staff who care for them. These relationships are often formed over a number of years, meaning that the pupils and staff truly get to know and trust each other. Different personalities are enjoyed, and each pupil's idiosyncrasies and needs are very well understood. This results in a sense of acceptance and care for each other in the

small community. Noticeably, peers celebrate each other's achievements and show sensitivity around their individual behaviours. 'We look out for each other,' a residential pupil said.

Residential pupils make good progress. School attendance and achievement are excellent, especially when bearing in mind pupils' starting points. They benefit from a routine and accept that going to school is a part of everyday life. A team of staff is available to help pupils if they are struggling at school. This team delivers sensitive support which gives pupils space to consider their behaviour and implement strategies to help them return to class. This increases their confidence and engagement in both school and social activities and enables them to manage conflict in a positive manner.

Residential pupils have numerous adults to whom they can address concerns. They know who the external independent visitors are and know the visiting governors by name. They feel that they have a meaningful voice and that their views make a difference. For example, members of the school council successfully lobbied the governors for an improvement in play equipment. Additionally, they have influenced the choice of decor in the major refurbishment of the boarding areas. Pupils are involved in the recruitment of staff. Other improvements include having a choice in activities and changes in menus.

Residential pupils' health needs are well met, and members of staff are all aware of any conditions or health needs. Medication administration is sound, with clear systems to ensure that all is correct and that practice is audited. The promotion of emotional health is excellent. Residential pupils have access to a variety of therapies and this means that they have numerous opportunities to reflect on their lives and behaviours.

Residential pupils praise the standard of food. They have varied, healthy high-quality meals. The chef is very aware of the emotional importance of food and the key role it plays in helping residential pupils feel cared for and nurtured.

Activities on offer are varied every evening. Residential pupils also have the option of 'chilling' in their living areas if they choose. However, the emphasis is on enabling them to take part in activities which develop their social skills and broaden their interests. Activities on offer are often community-based and ensure that the pupils are not limited to those based on the school site.

While residential pupils make excellent progress, there are times when they are not wholly aware of their specific targets. These are given to the pupils by their key workers but are not always acknowledged by them. This has not had an impact on their growth and development but does mean that they may not always be aware of the specific details contained in their target plans. The school's management is assessing the current system as it acknowledges that it needs review.

Residential pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives in education

or employment. There is a specific extended education unit which helps residential pupils to develop their independence skills at a rate commensurate with their abilities and vulnerabilities. This nurtures and supports them and improves their life chances and confidence.

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

Staff are alert to the needs and vulnerabilities of those in their care. They know individual risks and behaviours and the strategies they need to implement in order to promote safety and well-being. While staff knowledge of the residential pupils' vulnerabilities is excellent, written risk assessments are sometimes lacking in detail regarding descriptors of behaviours leading to the risk. However, measures to ensure safety are clear. This is an administrative shortfall which has not compromised residential pupils' safety.

Members of staff are clear on what they need to do if there are concerns regarding a pupil's safety. Contact with external agencies is prompt and this ensures that action can be taken to protect the pupil concerned. Records show that any concerns regarding incidents in the school are very well monitored and that information is shared with external professionals. This shows a willingness to be transparent and to seek advice if needed.

Residential pupils benefit greatly from the advice and guidance they receive in helping them to self-regulate their behaviours and to learn strategies and coping skills. Support is given from members of staff in all disciplines and leads to greater self-control, maturity and insight, together with a sense of achievement for the pupils. This approach has led to significant improvements. Practical support from members of staff in the residential area and those in the 'Ready to Learn' team is particularly well thought through and sensitive.

Residential pupils describe the rules as fair. There are clear boundaries and expectations embedded in the culture of the school and this encourages mutual respect and tolerance. The strong sense of community means that bullying is challenged at all levels and that the pupils feel safe.

Incidents of restraint are rare. When they do occur, they are assessed and used as an opportunity for everyone involved to reflect on their actions and on how future incidents can be avoided. Some communal areas of the school have CCTV coverage and if the incident happened in those areas, footage is used to help the review. The pupil concerned also has the opportunity to discuss the incident with a member of the therapy team, not involved in the incident, to discuss the event and to see if there are any concerns or triggers, or whether the pupil's behaviour support plan needs to be amended. This aids the development of bespoke plans for each pupil, and these can be changed swiftly to meet pupils' needs.

All pupils in the school have a daily opportunity to celebrate achievements and positive behaviour. These assemblies help the whole community enjoy the progress

made and enhance each individual pupil's sense of achievement.

All residential pupils are aware of the risks involved when using the internet. Emphasis is placed on enabling pupils to enter the virtual world with enough knowledge to keep themselves safe. Additional controls in the school internet system are very well used and monitoring of this is excellent.

The recruitment process used by the school is effective and meets the requirements outlined in legislation and guidance. Key members of staff receive training in safe recruitment and this knowledge is utilised in practice. This means that only members of staff with appropriate employment histories and background checks are employed at the school.

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

All members of staff are ambitious for the pupils in their care. They truly care for them and focus their efforts on helping them to progress. Consequently, many pupils make excellent progress due to the high-calibre support they receive from the staff.

The management team is very stable and experienced. The forthcoming departure of the principal has been carefully planned for and the succession plan is helping a smooth transition.

The range of different personalities in both the staff team and pupil population leads to a rich and varied community where difference is enjoyed and celebrated. The residential staff team is very stable, with a low turnover. This provides residential pupils with continuity of care and the opportunity to build lasting and stable relationships.

Additionally, all members of staff receive regular training, which ensures that they are up to date with practice developments and current trends. They also have regular supervision and annual appraisals. This ensures that their competency is examined and maintained and that they can reflect on their practice and feelings about their work.

Monitoring of records and performance is good. Senior members of staff audit records to ensure that they are of a good standard. Additionally, school governors carry out visits to the residential area on an unannounced basis. Residential pupils' views are sought during these visits and all residential pupils readily name those governors, as individuals, who they see on a regular basis and as adults to whom they can address concerns.

Residential pupils' views are valued and encouraged. All members of staff, at every level, are visible and accessible. As a result, pupils are confident that they have an influence in how their school is run and feel that their views make a difference.

The significant refurbishment of residential areas and other areas of the school, such

as the sports hall, provides excellent facilities which are very well maintained. This helps the residential pupils feel that their interests are protected and that the adults around them genuinely invest in their comfort and welfare.

## **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:** SC014636

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Richard Boyle

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

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## **Inspector**

Paul Taylor, social care inspector





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