

Alfriston School

Penn Road, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire HP9 2TS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Alfriston School is a day and weekly residential special school for girls who have moderate learning difficulties, aged 11 to 18 years. The school can also help girls who have emotional difficulties and minor mobility and sensory disabilities. There are 150 pupils, 18 of whom currently access the residential provision for three nights during each week, from Monday to Wednesday. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 March 2019

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: 21 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is good because:

- Consultation with children is good. Children are involved in the planning, running and development of the residential provision.
- Leaders and managers consider relevant social care research and developments to use in their work at the school. In addition, they carry out research projects, which has led to innovative and creative approaches to care.
- A strength of the school is the work undertaken regarding children's emotional and mental health. This is leading to children developing an understanding of their feelings and emotions and the skills to manage these in a positive way.
- Children receive high-quality, individualised care from a dedicated team of staff, who are very child centred.
- Staff have built strong relationship with the children whom they care for and their families.

Children learn independence skills which will prepare them for the next stage of their lives.

The residential special school's areas for development are:

- Leaders and managers are not ensuring that records of visual checks on fire equipment and means of escape are carried out.
- The records of staff recruitment are not of a consistently good quality and do not evidence the discussions held. Leaders and managers are not maintaining records of candidates' interviews with the school council.
- The records of staff supervision sessions are not of a consistently good quality.

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:

- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (national minimum standard 13.8).
In particular, ensure that fire precaution records, including visual checks of fire equipment and means of escape, are undertaken.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the records of recruitment interviews reflect the discussions held. Also, keep a record of the staff interviews carried out by the school council.
- Ensure that the records of staff supervision sessions are of a consistently good quality and contain details of the discussions held and any action to be taken in light of these discussions.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive high-quality, individualised care from a dedicated team of staff who are very child centred. Staff know the children well and have an excellent understanding of the children's individual vulnerabilities and strengths. This has led to the staff team developing strong relationships with the children and their families. Children love boarding.

Parents and carers spoken to were overwhelmingly positive about the staff, especially the head of boarding. Parents and carers praised the staff for their effective communication and keeping them fully involved in their children's lives. One parent said that one of the hardest, but the best, decisions that they have made was to let their child board.

Children's medical and wider health needs are well met. Medication is stored securely, and clear records are maintained of all medication dispensed. A parent praised the staff for their support and information sharing, as their child is on a medical trial. The provision for well-being and mental health is excellent. Children have access to a range of on-site support services and therapists. If additional support is needed, the health and well-being lead has developed extensive links with external professionals, which ensures that children's needs are promptly met.

Children benefit from living in a residential provision which is furnished and maintained to a high standard. It is spacious, comfortable and welcoming. Children are encouraged to personalise their dormitories. In addition to the main residential area, there is a self-contained flat for four children. This provides the older children with an opportunity to care for themselves, budget, shop and prepare meals. The children living in the flat love this opportunity. They are proud of their achievements and were keen to demonstrate their skills. As well as this independence work, all children are being taught how to travel independently and to manage their money. This work is invaluable in preparing the children for the next stage of their lives.

Children are supported to take part in a vast range of activities on the school site and in the local community. These activities are fun and also help the children to develop their social skills and self-confidence and to build their self-esteem. Children are able to pursue their own interests, as well as having new experiences. The children also take part in a range of charity work, which helps them to develop an understanding of the world around them.

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

Children feel safe at the school. Safeguarding systems are implemented effectively. Concerns are shared appropriately with external agencies and parents. The response to any safeguarding concern is swift and protects the children. Records of

safeguarding events vary in quality, ranging from appropriate to good. This is currently being addressed. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding matters, which they reflect well in their practice.

Records of visual checks on fire safety equipment and means of escape require improvement. Staff said that they are doing these visual checks, but this is not supported by the records. A recent visit from the fire service has resulted in a number of actions to be addressed and an appropriate action plan is in place. Detailed personal evacuation plans provide staff with clear guidance on what support each child needs.

Staff respond effectively to any incidents of self-harm, and excellent work is undertaken with children regarding their emotional and mental health. This is leading to children developing an understanding of their feelings and emotions and the skills to manage these in a positive way. This work also includes the risks of sexual exploitation, and is helping some girls to understand their behaviour and to reduce the risks by being able to make safer choices.

Behaviour is managed well by praise and positive reinforcement. This approach is supported by the work that staff do to help the children to understand their behaviours and develop coping strategies. Parents praised the staff for their work in this area.

Risk is managed well, and good-quality risk assessments are in place for each child. These assessments provide clear guidance for staff about how to reduce risks effectively, and are kept under review.

Safer recruitment guidance is followed in practice and supports the protection of children. Records of interviews are not consistently maintained. They do not always evidence the discussion held or include information about interviews carried out by the school council. Good records are maintained about adults who live on the school site but are not employed by the school.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have ensured that the majority of national minimum standards for residential special schools have been met. The national minimum standard relating to the records of fire safety checks has not been met.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and areas for development and have plans in place to further improve the residential provision. However, the issues regarding fire safety records were not identified until a visit from the Fire and Rescue Service on 5 February 2019. The head of boarding is currently undertaking a self-assessment of the residential provision against the national minimum standards. The assistant head is providing helpful critical challenge to support this assessment.

The statement of principles and practice for the residential provision provides an accurate overview of work undertaken, especially in developing the children's independence skills, emotional development and awareness of risk. The statement of principles and practice is being reviewed in light of changes in the staff team. The residential provision is managed effectively. The head of boarding is very experienced and is a good role model for staff and children. Parents praised the head of boarding for the support that she has provided to them, as well as to their children. The head of boarding is currently reviewing the systems in place to evidence the progress that the children are making, so as to provide further clarity in this area.

Staffing arrangements are appropriate to meet the needs of the children. Staff are very child focused and have high aspirations for the children whom they care for. The staff are well supported in their role, enabling them to keep children and needs at the centre of their work.

Staff receive regular formal supervision to aid their development and ensure that children receive good-quality care. Records of the supervision sessions are not consistently of good quality, as they do not always reflect the discussions held or confirm the agreed outcome actions. All new staff have supervision every two weeks to help them to settle in and understand their role. Staff supervision is supported by good-quality training, which helps to develop the individual and the team and enable them to meet the children's needs. When needed, specialist training is provided.

Consultation with children is good. They are involved in the planning, running and development of the residential provision. Children said that they feel listened to, that their ideas are valued and, where possible, implemented. The school council is an effective forum, enabling children to present their views.

Leaders and managers consider relevant social care research and developments to use in their work at the school. In addition, they carry out research projects, which has led to innovative and creative approaches to care. This is especially evident in the school's excellent work on children's health and well-being.

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 difference 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: SC023097

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jinna Male

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01494 673740

Email address: jinna.male@alfristonschool.com

Inspector

Wendy Anderson, social care inspector



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