

# Mount Tamar Special School

Row Lane, St Budeaux, Plymouth, Devon PL5 2EF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Mount Tamar Special School provides 110 places for children from five to 16 years old who have emotional and behavioural support care needs. The boarding provision, provides boarding for up to 10 children per night from Monday to Friday during term time. The school is situated in the city of Plymouth. The boarding accommodation comprises two floors in a purpose-built building adjacent to the school.

**Inspection dates:** 25 to 27 November 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<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	outstanding
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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:** 27 November 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Inspection judgements**

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

Children who visit and stay overnight benefit greatly from a high standard of nurturing care. The small, stable staff team is dedicated to promoting best outcomes for children.

The head of care and her staff team support children to develop important life skills. These include positive behaviour, emotional resilience, manners, and kindness. Children are helped to learn practical skills such as telling the time, bed-making, washing, and cleaning their teeth. Older children are supported to travel independently, engage in work experience, cook, and budget.

Children have excellent relationships with staff. These relationships are emulated between staff and parents. Many families are under a great deal of pressure. Staff seek to help where possible, which includes providing both practical and emotional support. This often enhances positive outcomes for children.

Introductions for children who are new to the residential service are sensitive and individually tailored. One child needed several months of tea visits before staying over; others have a few visits and then begin to stay. Introductions are carried out at the child's pace.

Staff spend a great deal of time getting to know children to understand their personalities and needs. This provides an excellent foundation for care planning.

Children are supported to have varied social experiences, and to enjoy a wide variety of activities. These include playing pool and table tennis, swimming, bike riding, shopping, visiting theme parks and going on trips abroad.

Children are encouraged by staff to share their feelings and experiences. An example, of this is when children return on a Monday and each child is given time to talk about their weekend. This is excellent practice that enables children to feel valued and listened to.

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

There have been no significant safeguarding issues since the last inspection. However, there are good systems in place to manage concerns, when required. There has been one physical intervention. This was well managed and appropriate.

There is a good medication system in place which is overseen by a skilled member of the team. At times, children require medication outside of set doses. Staff are currently required to contact parents if this medication is needed. There is no clear

process in place if parents cannot be reached.

Boundary setting for children is consistent and supports the development of good behaviour from a praise-based approach. This excellent practice supports the development of children's self-esteem.

All parents spoken with during this inspection conveyed that their children had benefited greatly from their stays. Benefits included increased social opportunities and support to gain independence skills, and importantly the children have fun.

The safeguarding policy on the school website was out of date prior to this inspection. However, this document has been updated and was uploaded to the website during the inspection. There is no child-friendly version on the website to inform children what to do if they have a concern.

A new mobile phone policy has been devised. This policy is aimed at how children use their phones. Again, guidance for children lacks clarity.

The head of care and her staff team have supported parents, carers and children to attend a course to develop their communication skills. This is great practice which has helped both children and their families.

The outdoor lighting in the car park in front the house is poor. This area can be very dark in winter and as such, it presents various hazards.

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

The head of care and headteacher work closely together, which promotes excellent outcomes for children. They both work creatively to drive improvement and raise standards for children.

Leaders, managers and staff have high aspirations for children. They are providing a consistently high standard of care for children who may have previously struggled in mainstream provision.

Care planning is dynamic, and solution-focused thinking is evident. This means that every attempt is made to enable children to stay over according to their needs, no matter how complex.

Staff have been carefully selected. They are highly trained and each brings their own skills base and committed approach. This translates into children receiving a high standard of nurturing care.

A research project has been undertaken looking at how to support children to gain important life skills such as budgeting, cooking, developing healthy relationships, and independent travel. The independence project aims to support children on an individual basis according to their own needs, wishes and feelings. Children who have

participated have gained a great deal from this approach.

One child who spoke to the inspector talked about how he could now visit the hairdressers on his own, which is something he felt he could never do before. He has also done work experience with horses, which has given him a great deal of confidence.

An awards ceremony was held for children who had completed the independence project. Staff put in a great deal of effort to make this a special occasion. Children attended with their families and were given their awards by a local politician. Photographs of the event depict the children beaming with pride.

The property is maintained to a high standard. Children's bedrooms contain quality furniture which supports a homely feel. There is a large lounge area which houses both a pool table and table tennis. Children take pride in this environment and were seen to be relaxed and happy when visiting.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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:** SC038087

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Brett Storry

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01752 365128

**Email address:** [mount.tamar.school@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:mount.tamar.school@plymouth.gov.uk)

## **Inspector(s)**

Polly Soper, social care inspector (lead)



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