

The Caldecott School

Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6PW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Caldecott Foundation School is a non-maintained special school which provides a service for day and residential pupils between the ages of seven and 16 years of age. It is a school for pupils who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties and who may in addition have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder. The residential provision can accommodate up to 10 pupils.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 December 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: 4 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Key findings from this inspection

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- The culture in the home is welcoming and supportive and strenuous efforts are made to help children feel safe and loved.
- The manager and staff are committed and proud to have a positive influence on improving children's lives and achievements.
- Children often achieve beyond their expectations, much to everyone's delight.
- Partnership working with families is exceptional.
- Safeguarding the children is at the heart of the support provided by staff. Safeguarding practices develop the awareness of children and their families about how to manage risk.
- There is an expectation that children will be given every opportunity to succeed. Success is celebrated and enjoyed by everyone.

What does the residential special school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that all children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours of restraint including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by. (NMS 12.5)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children enjoy their boarding experience and celebrate their life-changing achievements and progress. Their success and the shared pride in this have emboldened them and helped them to make huge strides in their self-esteem and confidence.

Transition planning is carefully thought through before a child moves in. The ability of established children to cope with the change in dynamics a new arrival will bring is carefully assessed by the staff, boarding manager and senior managers. This ensures minimal disruption and means that children's momentum and enjoyment of their success are not compromised.

Relationships between the children and adults who care for them are strong and supportive. There is genuine warmth and attention shared between them and it is clear that the children enjoy being with the staff. 'She makes me feel safe and reassures me' was a comment made by a child. Another reported, 'They care about me and take me to fun places.'

A particular strength of this service is the drive and commitment to work with wider families. This leads to an improved home life and ensures that children have continued to live with their families with less likelihood of breakdowns. Feedback from parents is effusive. For example, 'Their support has changed my life' and 'I totally trust them' were two statements made.

Collaboration between the staff and stakeholders is excellent. Parents as well as professionals such as social workers are glowing in their praise about the regularity and quality of communication. This underpins the sense that everyone is working closely together to promote each child's success and ongoing development.

Communication between the boarding provision and school is of a high standard. Staff are in daily contact and will spend time in school to support each child if needed. Close attention is given to preparing children to re-enter education with their peers, often for the first time in a number of years. This nurturing and carefully thought-through process ensures that the chances of success are greatly improved. Success in this area has exceeded parental hopes.

Children's views are valued and encouraged. They have an influence in all areas of the running of this service. Examples include being able to influence choices of activities and menus and also having their opinions sought during staff appraisals. This approach ensures that children feel included and have a genuine impact and meaningful part in decision-making. In turn, they feel that there is a genuine concern for their well-being and that they matter.

The support given to children by the staff helps them to experience success and increase their confidence. Examples include children being able to take part in activities in the community and develop new friendships. For many, this has been restricted and lacking in success at their previous placements. This approach not only

enriches their life experiences but is priceless in developing their self-belief and belief that other adults trust them and expect them to succeed.

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

Improving children's emotional and physical well-being is the central drive of practice. Each child's safety is promoted and protected to an excellent standard. Their vulnerabilities are known, and strategies are put in place not only to ensure their safety but to develop their skills and knowledge to manage risks and increase their own awareness.

The impact of this carefully worked-through approach, which is not risk-averse, is that children are able to expand their life experiences and skills. Consequently, they develop their sense of safety and responsibility, much to their own and their carers' delight.

There are very clear individual protocols in place should children go missing. The staff's knowledge of the children in their care means that children receive prompt support should they be unsettled or distressed. This has meant that no children have been missing since the last inspection in March 2019. Any incidents when children have left the building without permission have been sensitively resolved. This has enabled them to return without leaving the grounds and has led to meaningful debriefs which have helped all involved, child and staff alike, to understand how the situation arose and what strategies can be used to prevent recurrence of the behaviour.

A strong embedded tolerance of each other's behaviours and idiosyncrasies helps the children to support each other and to recognise when their peers are struggling. This mutual acknowledgment of each other's feelings helps to encourage an atmosphere of strong community support and care. Children are praised when they show insight into their own and other people's feelings. Progress in this area has been recognised as excellent, especially by social workers, therapists and parents.

All members of staff are aware of what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about a child's welfare. All incidents are shared promptly with relevant agencies so that action plans to address any concerns can be implemented swiftly.

Staff are aware of the potential risks associated with internet usage. They share their knowledge and strategies with parents and children so that internet safety is seen as everyone's responsibility. Consequently, there is a sound knowledge of the risks and how to avoid them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The boarding manager has an excellent understanding and insight into this provision's strengths and weaknesses. He has a clear plan for the development of the service and is careful in his approach to ensure that staff skills and knowledge keep pace with the children's needs. Consequently, he has, with senior management support, expanded the staff team gradually to ensure stability and consistency before

admitting new children to the setting.

This approach has resulted in a staff team that is united in its efforts to achieve excellence. Staff have high expectations and ambitions for themselves and for the children they care for. Children are at the centre of their practice. The staff readily seek advice and guidance from other professionals and demonstrate a constant curiosity and quest to expand their knowledge and expertise.

In turn, children benefit from a staff team that is willing to adjust its approach so that each child receives bespoke care aimed at helping them move forward in all aspects of their lives. Children and their parents acknowledge the life-changing impact this provision has had. Everyone takes delight and pride in the progress the children have made.

Communication between the staff, parents and professionals is excellent. Unanimous feedback from stakeholders praises the fluidity and promptness of communication. The boarding manager actively pursues professionals for information and responds to issues if needed. This conscientious approach engenders trust from others and ensures that everyone is clear that the staff will advocate strongly on behalf of the children in their care.

Monitoring of records and practice is of a very good standard overall. One shortfall was noted in relation to the boarding manager ensuring that an independent person monitored a restraint record he had written. This was a minor shortfall readily accepted and rectified and was in relation to a very brief physical intervention. There was no compromise to the child's well-being as a result of this error.

Acceptance of diversity is embedded in the culture of this home. Each child's differences of personality and need are welcomed and celebrated. Tolerance and acceptance are key themes which thread through daily life. Children's individual views are valued and promoted. They have an active voice and influence on the running of this setting and their preferences are listened to and acted on. As well as influencing day-to-day decisions in areas such as choice of activities and menus, they are actively involved in the development of their care plans and behavioural strategies. Staff are insightful and skilful in seeking the children's views and take into account their potential difficulties in expressing themselves. This approach helps the children feel valued and empowered, often for the first time in their lives.

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: 1276600

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Karen Norman

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Inspector

Paul Taylor, social care inspector (lead)



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