

Limpsfield Grange School

89 Bluehouse Lane, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0RZ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Limpsfield Grange School is a maintained day and residential special school catering for girls between the ages of 11 and 16 who have communication and interaction difficulties. The majority have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and suffer from high and persistent levels of anxiety. Residential accommodation is available from Monday to Thursday. Currently, 29 pupils access the boarding provision. Some of these are on a shared basis, with pupils staying on different nights, as there are 24 available beds.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 December 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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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: 5 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Residential students make excellent progress from their starting points through the highly individualised, nurturing and well-planned support the staff provide. They thoroughly enjoy their time spent in the residential provision, spending time with their friends, participating in a wide range of activities and developing their independence. Some are making friends for the first time, having been socially isolated in previous school settings. They are learning new skills and developing personal interests. Their self-confidence and self-esteem are developing as they receive valuable help from the staff to manage their anxiety and social difficulties.

Parents and carers are emphatic in their praise for the support the staff provide. A parent in a recent Ofsted survey stated that the staff had transformed her daughter's life: 'She loves going to school and has a sense of belonging in an organisation where she is accepted for what she is and who she is. She is confident and her potential is unlocked.' Another commented, in regard to her daughter, that the residential provision has 'been a godsend and helped turn her around. She has improved so much in all areas.'

The staff know each student very well and so can identify each student's specific needs. Through targeted, thoughtful, personalised key-work sessions, purposeful group sessions and activities, and the respectful and trusting day-to-day interactions between the students and the staff, the students learn to manage their emotions and reduce their levels of anxiety. They make significant progress in their well-being, academic achievement, communication skills and independence. Support from the staff is always focused on preparing the students for the reality of life after school.

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

The staff's main aim for residential students is to develop their independence in the widest sense. The students benefit from individualised support that helps them build emotional resilience, be able to self-regulate their emotions, have socially acceptable communication skills and believe in themselves. The staff look beyond the students' time at school. Their support is directed at enabling the students to join society and manage their difficulties themselves, as adults faced with the realities of everyday life.

Many of the students experience high levels of anxiety which significantly affects their emotional well-being. Recognising the impact of this on their academic achievement and their ability to be independent, senior leaders have developed the 'Well-being, Achievement, Communication and Independence' (WACI) curriculum. This is being integrated across all aspects of the students' school life to improve their

emotional and physical well-being. A new well-being centre has recently opened, showing the commitment from senior leaders to promote a therapeutic approach to help the students manage their anxieties. Investment in additional specialist staff to address the students' emotional needs would further advance this provision.

Safeguarding the students, in the context of their social vulnerabilities, is crucial to the support provided. A priority for the staff is to educate the students to keep themselves safe. In addition to formal sessions through the WACI curriculum, constant informal conversations with students reinforce their learning. Structured focus groups target specific safeguarding issues, such as e-safety, over a period of time. Staff respond quickly to any emerging themes and ensure that additional support is in place to protect students while continuously raising their awareness and understanding of the risks they face.

The staff are well trained in current safeguarding issues. A team of skilled designated safeguarding officers ensure that the staff receive regular safeguarding updates. Consequently, the staff are observant, alert and report concerns promptly. Appropriate action is taken by the designated safeguarding officers to promote the welfare of the students. Rigorous recruitment systems and health and safety procedures contribute to a strong safeguarding culture in the school. The safeguarding governor has extensive knowledge and experience in safeguarding matters and is proactive in monitoring safeguarding in the school. Students spoken to during the inspection, stated they feel very safe and parents had no hesitation in saying they have no concerns about their daughter's safety in the residential provision.

Structure and routines help the students to feel safe and reduce their levels of anxiety. But the staff are not rigid in their approach and help the students adjust to change, as it is a reality of life. The strength of the relationships between the staff and the students is the foundation of all the support the staff provide. The staff model appropriate interactions. They listen and respond sensitively to students. Consequently, the students trust the staff, enjoy their company and their behaviour is excellent. One student commented, 'Staff talk to us and give us tips and advice about everything.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Inspirational leadership has created a culture across the school in which all the staff are motivated to constantly improve the support they provide for the students. Senior leaders and managers are creative and innovative, and they encourage and empower the staff to be the same. All the staff work effectively together to deliver their vision that 'together we make a difference'. The students thrive as a result of the deep understanding that all the staff have of the students' individual needs, the effective targeted support and the staff's awareness and recognition of the characteristics of females on the autism spectrum.

Systems for training, staff development, appraisal and supervision are well thought through and drive improvement. Targets for the staff are directly linked to the school improvement plan and are reviewed regularly through reflective supervision focused on the needs of the students. Managers frequently observe staff practice to monitor how the staff are meeting the students' individual needs.

The staff work corroboratively, cohesively and flexibly. They welcome new ideas, value each other's contribution and are committed to helping each residential student reach their potential. Senior leaders are not complacent about the effectiveness of the residential provision. Through their own systematic monitoring and using the expertise of other professionals such as the speech and language therapist and the highly experienced independent visitor, they continuously evaluate the support the team is providing. The highly skilled and experienced governing body provides effective oversight, sharp scrutiny and challenge to the senior leadership team to maintain high standards of support for the students. Consequently, the students benefit from continuous improvements in the support they receive from the staff.

Leaders and managers are passionate about raising awareness more widely of the specific needs of females with autism. They disseminate best practice to schools and external professionals and continue to lead on national research in the field of female autism spectrum disorder.

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

Recommendations

- Consider investing in additional specialist staff to strengthen the support for students' emotional needs.

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: SC013885

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Sarah Wild

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01883 713 928

Email address: head@limpsfield-grange.surrey.sch.uk

Inspector

Jan Hunnam, Ofsted inspector

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