

# Sunnydown School

Sunnydown School, Whyteleafe Road, Caterham, Surrey CR3 5ED

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a maintained residential and day school for boys aged 11 to 16 who have communication and interaction difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Currently, there are 83 pupils on the school roll, with 24 pupils accessing the residential provision. There are 23 residential places, with pupils residing on varying numbers of nights. At the time of the inspection, there were eight residential pupils as some were on a school ski trip. The residential accommodation is on the first floor of a teaching building.

**Inspection dates:** 13 to 15 January 2020

**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:** 26 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Residential pupils benefit from highly effective individualised, nurturing care and support from the staff. Their positive experiences are directly related to the trusting relationships that they form with the staff, who are dedicated to improving the pupils' well-being and to helping them to build a happy and successful life in the future. Pupils commented on how much they enjoy boarding, particularly the wide range of activities and spending time with their friends.

Parents and carers acknowledge the progress that their sons have made in relation to their social skills, their maturity and their ability to make and sustain friendships, which for some pupils has historically been very difficult.

Working collaboratively with staff across the school, the staff use their insightful knowledge of each pupil to ensure that effective support advances their development. The support from the staff assists the pupils in developing skills they will need to cope as adults.

With a focus on pupils' emotional needs, staff are alert to signs of distress, anxiety and stress. Together with the effective interventions provided by the pastoral team, the staff provide appropriate support to help pupils develop resilience and coping strategies to manage their difficulties. The pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem through reliably knowing that the staff will respond to their specific needs.

Developing and extending the pupils' independence skills are fundamental to the ethos of the residential provision. The pupils gain recognition for their achievements in this area through an accredited programme of learning. The staff have a continuous focus on preparing pupils for their futures. This is not just in relation to their practical skills but also to help them develop resilience and confident, tolerant, responsible inter-personal skills. A parent commented how, within a safe environment, pupils have opportunities to learn how the world outside works and 'a chance of leading a normal, self-sufficient life'.

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

Protecting the pupils and educating them to keep themselves safe underpin all the staff's practice. Safeguarding pupils is embedded into all aspects of school life and is consistently a high priority for senior leaders and managers.

The staff are well trained, confident and alert in their safeguarding role. They have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the current issues that can present a risk to the residential pupils. Concerns are promptly reported to the experienced and

well-trained team of designated safeguarding officers, who meet weekly, discuss the concerns in detail and take appropriate action.

The designated safeguarding lead monitors and analyses the nature of the concerns raised each month to ensure that the staff are aware of emerging patterns and trends. Senior leaders are highly responsive to the identified needs of pupils. Concerns in relation to the pupils' increasingly complex emotional needs have prompted the enhancement of the pastoral team to support pupils' well-being. Other concerning behaviour affecting the welfare of some pupils has consistently decreased due to the targeted support provided. A thorough and detailed safeguarding action plan, incorporating action points from a safeguarding audit undertaken by an external specialist, prioritises areas for the staff to focus on to protect pupils. Successful partnership working between the school safeguarding team, external safeguarding agencies and families promotes the welfare of pupils.

Relationships between the staff and the pupils are extremely positive and are at the heart of successful behaviour management strategies. Structure, routines and clear boundaries help the pupils develop a sense of safety, protection and trust. The staff model appropriate interactions, supporting the pupils to make friends, maintain friendships and learn to live with others.

The pupils' behaviour is excellent. Incidents are rare and physical intervention is not used in the residential provision. The staff know and understand each pupil very well and they are skilled in diffusing potentially difficult situations. Pupils respond positively to the support that the staff provide.

Recruitment procedures are implemented to ensure, as far as possible, that all staff are safe to work with pupils at the school. Routinely verifying all prospective employee references is identified as a point of improvement.

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

Ambitious and aspirational leadership is reflected in a culture of high expectation in which the staff share the common vision to transform the lives of the pupils. Boarding is integral to achieving this vision, with staff across the school valuing the important contribution which the residential staff make in supporting the pupils to be resilient, confident and active learners. All the staff share a common aim of providing an excellent residential experience for the pupils to enhance their learning outcomes and make significant personal and social development to advance their future life chances.

The residential pupils benefit immensely through support from the staff, who are professional, passionate and committed to providing them with the appropriate levels of individual help and guidance, so that they can succeed, develop new skills and gain confidence in their own abilities.

Leaders and managers seek to continuously develop and improve the pupils' experience. The pastoral team has been strengthened through additional staff and wide-ranging training. They work collaboratively and cohesively with the residential staff to support the pupils' emotional well-being so that residential pupils can take full advantage of the learning opportunities in the residential provision.

The residential staff complete a wide range of training to meet the diverse needs of pupils, with a sharp focus on keeping them safe and promoting their well-being. Through the staff appraisal system, regular supervision, frequent staff meetings and continuous guidance from the residential managers, the staff receive effective support to improve their practice and their support for the residential pupils. Targets for staff development are appropriately linked to the school development plan.

Integral to the continuous drive for improvement is effective monitoring. The residential managers have a strong focus on self-evaluation but also welcome audits from external professionals to ensure that high standards are maintained. The residential managers are prompt and efficient in their response to the independent visitor reports and recommendations from other audit reports, with the governing body overseeing action to improve the service.

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

### **Recommendation**

- Ensure that all pre-employment references are verified.

### **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:** SC013896

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr Paul Jensen

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Jan Hunnam, Ofsted inspector

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