

# Muntham House School

Barns Green, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0NJ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

The school is a non-maintained residential special school for up to 74 boys aged between five and 19 years, of whom 48 may be boarders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. It is a designated 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 school buildings are set in extensive grounds of 26 acres. Accommodation is located in the main building with a separate building for the Extended Education Unit.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 12 March 2020

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> 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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**Date of previous inspection:** 29 January 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This residential special school is outstanding because:

- Residential pupils enjoy boarding and thrive in this school.
- Everyone's safety is promoted diligently, and members of staff implement safeguarding systems very effectively.
- All pupils' identities and differences are valued and celebrated. The rich mix of personalities and backgrounds makes this a nurturing and accepting school.
- Support from different staff across all disciplines is excellently planned and delivered. Communication is meaningful between all the different departments.
- Unanimous feedback from pupils and staff states that the food provided is of a high standard and meets everyone's needs.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils feel safe and have a variety of people with whom they can share concerns and receive reassurance.
- The management team is ambitious for the staff and pupils. Success is celebrated and enjoyed by the whole community.
- The residential staff are very experienced and exude a deep sense of caring and wanting what is best for the residential pupils in their care.

The residential special school's areas for development:

- Ensure that all members of staff consistently implement the system informing the maintenance team of issues which need to be addressed.
- Provide governors with a written action plan after visits carried out under Standard 20.

## Inspection judgements

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

Residential pupils blossom in this setting. Each pupil has their needs thoroughly assessed prior to admission. As a result, they receive high-quality support which helps them on their journeys to success and self-reliance.

Relationships are warm and supportive and are developed, in most cases, over a number of years. In that time, residential pupils form meaningful bonds with the staff. Pupils develop trust and believe that the staff will do their utmost to protect them and help them move forward with their lives. 'This school has helped me find out who I am,' was a comment made by a residential pupil. It is clear that members of staff have a deep and meaningful understanding of each pupil for whom they care.

Careful assessment ensures that each new admission to the residential provision is well planned. Consequently, the impact and change of dynamics does not affect the progress made by the established group. The close liaison between the different teams involved in this process underpins the thoroughness, pace and effective management of the admissions.

Residential pupils enjoy successes which they have not achieved at previous schools. Their attendance is excellent and progress made in some cases is exceptional. Residential pupils develop their social skills and have opportunities to take part in enriching activities. These not only provide enjoyment, but help pupils develop confidence and self-esteem. For example, some residential pupils attend youth clubs, cadets and residential trips with their peers. Prior to their joining the school, they had faced isolation and, in some cases, escalating anti-social behaviour. Their successes are exemplary.

Residential pupils have absolute confidence that they have a meaningful influence in their school. The student council makes presentations to the governors' committee and puts forwards ideas for development. For example, it was successful in creating a proposal and plan for new playground equipment to be installed. All pupils have numerous avenues which they can follow if they wish to raise concerns or discuss their feelings. A broad range of therapists as well as key staff are readily available and this ensures that pupils' views and opinions are valued and encouraged.

Excellent planning prepares residential pupils for independence. All have opportunities to plan and budget for weekly meals. They develop their independence in other areas, such as travel, at rates in line with their ability and vulnerability. Importantly, their social and coping skills are strengthened considerably so that their chances of success in social, work or education settings are massively increased.

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

Members of staff work diligently and tirelessly to ensure that all residential pupils and, if needed, their families and siblings are kept safe. Close liaison between the different teams that work on-site ensures that issues identified are shared promptly with external agencies if needed. This, in turn, leads to support and action by these professionals so that children's safety is promoted. Records show that senior managers actively communicate with safeguarding agencies to ensure that a sense of urgency is maintained where necessary. A designated officer stated, 'Other schools could learn from Muntham.'

The management of behaviour is tailored to meet individual needs. This means that the members of staff have an excellent understanding of each child's idiosyncrasies and specific traits. In turn, the pupils learn to develop their skills and resilience, and behaviour improves steadily to the point at which they are able to take part in education and social activities successfully. This is impressive when bearing in mind their starting points.

There are clear procedures in place should a residential pupil be missing or away from the site without permission. These procedures are implemented consistently and residential pupils have returned safely with staff support and encouragement. Importantly, review and reflection about these incidents has enabled the residential pupils involved to develop their independence and negotiation skills. As a result, some pupils have safely and appropriately managed independent travel and time away from the school site.

There is a strongly embedded ethos of ensuring that each pupil feels emotionally safe. This caring and child-centred approach helps them to be able to reflect and learn from incidents and life experiences and how to use new strategies. This enables pupils to feel safe and confident in dealing with challenges and conflict appropriately.

Incidents of restraint are scrutinised by managers. This ensures that the pupil and staff can learn from the incident and any changes in behaviour strategies can be quickly implemented to avoid reoccurrence.

Residential pupils say that bullying is challenged effectively should it occur. 'You can report it and stuff will be done to sort it,' was a comment made by a residential pupil. Other residential pupils said, 'It's just not a problem here' and 'It's safe here, they make you feel safe.'

Training around internet safety is provided to staff and pupils. This approach ensures that every member of the school community is aware of the risks involved in the cyber world. Access to the internet is individually tailored for each pupil at a level commensurate with their assessed understanding and risk. Additionally, a member of staff routinely scrutinises internet access and histories to ensure that everyone is using the internet safely.

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

High standards are expected and achieved. Staff are ambitious for the pupils in their care and take delight in their achievements and progress. This enthusiasm and drive to help them succeed also motivates the pupils. Consequently, they make significant progress and, in some cases, spectacular improvements.

Governors and senior staff welcome feedback and are keen to learn from comments made by visitors and stakeholders. A clear plan for improvement is in place and some targets have been achieved, for example increasing pupil numbers and the scope of the school offer. Additionally, work is underway to build a canine therapy unit and a horticultural centre. The senior management team avoids complacency and is keen to drive the service forward.

Governors and an independent visitor carry out unannounced visits to the residential provision. These visits always include interviews with residential pupils so that their views are sought on how they feel they are being treated. Although shortfalls identified during these visits are addressed by the senior managers, they do not provide a written response to the governors to confirm this. While this has not had an impact on the quality of care or speed of response, this would provide an audit trail which will swiftly identify how shortfalls have been addressed.

There is an electronic system for staff to report any damage or repairs needed. This is not always consistently used and so it is possible that repairs may be delayed. The senior managers acknowledge this and are working towards ensuring that the system is more effective.

Regular and varied training ensures that all members of staff have the knowledge and skills to provide excellent support and guidance to the residential pupils. Close liaison between the various teams in the school ensures a cohesive and well-planned approach. Shared expertise is focused on improving outcomes for every pupil, whatever their needs.

The residential provision provides a caring, safe environment where residential pupils can relax and find stability. This, in turn, prepares them for life at the school and for their future, whether this is in further education or employment. The nurturing and well thought through care ensures that each residential pupil can progress to their maximum potential.

Records show that senior leaders actively communicate with external agencies and assertively advocate on behalf of the pupils and their families. The liaison has been effective in ensuring that support is provided to families, especially outside of term time. This conscientious caring approach has helped families sustain stability and, in some cases, kept families together. The practice in this area is of a particularly high standard.

The sense of community and acceptance at this school is excellent. Tolerance and appreciation of everyone's unique character and needs threads through daily life.

Pupils are supportive and inclusive and their unique identities and personalities are enjoyed and celebrated as being part of a rich and safe community.

## **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:** SC014636

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Harry Anderson

**Type of school:** Residential Special School

**Telephone number:** 01403 730302

**Email address:** [principal@muntham.org.uk](mailto:principal@muntham.org.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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