

Marland School

Devon County Council, Marland School, Peters Marland, Torrington, Devon EX38 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This school is a local authority-maintained school. It is a member of a foundation trust with other special schools within the local authority. The school provides weekly residential care, over four nights, for up to 40 boys between the ages of 8 and 16 years. The school provides education and care for boys who have social, emotional and/or mental health needs. At the time of this inspection, there were 37 children on roll.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, considering **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: 10 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Students make exceptional social, emotional and educational progress in this school. This progress is often from a background featuring childhood trauma and previous school exclusions. One student commented: 'I used to have real anger management issues, now I just have the occasional blip.' Destination records for the students who left in the last academic year show a 100% success rate in them moving on to further education, employment or training.

There is a seamless holistic approach across the school to providing for students' needs. Students experience great food, terrific surroundings and nurturing staff who value them and demonstrate unconditional positive regard. There are high expectations of students and a positive can-do attitude. Twice-daily meetings between education and care staff allow for additional support being offered to students who may be struggling in either setting. The care and support provided to students are individualised and inclusive, allowing them to build meaningful, trusting relationships with the staff. It is fundamental to the success of placements that the views and wishes of students are frequently sought and considered in any decision-making.

An extensive and exciting range of activities are available to students to support their learning, development and social skills. Apart from the thrills of surfing, coasteering and motorbike riding, students also choose to play games, read or spend time watching TV. The school transports some students to their hometown community events in the evening to sustain their continuing involvement in team sports or uniformed groups.

Practice delivery and development are based in research. The senior leadership team is keeping up to date with current thinking and practice improvements through several networking opportunities and involvement in professional groups which inform and support childcare practice and safeguarding, for example the police and Ofsted. Care staff undertake a research project as part of studying higher-level qualifications.

The school continued to prioritise safeguarding and supporting students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Students feel safe in this school. They trust the staff to manage any difficult situations and to keep them safe. Staff have detailed information about new students, potential risks and how to keep them safe.

There are clear expectations and boundaries in place. Rewards encourage students to manage their anxiety and frustrations in a way that is acceptable to others. Over time, students develop their social and emotional skills, which leads to a sense of well-being and increased confidence.

The quality of relationships between staff and students minimises the need to use physical restraint. Staff are aware of the subtle changes in behaviour and signals that a student may be getting anxious or distressed. Staff can intervene and offer early support where possible to avoid incidents. Students rarely go missing from the school and effective measures are in place to find them and return them to safety as soon as possible.

Risk is well managed through assessment and planning. Students are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks, and many have developed confidence through participating in skilful activities.

Support provided to reduce students' harmful behaviour, such as smoking, is not always well recorded in care records to demonstrate the impact of these interventions. This was discussed with leaders and managers during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders, managers and staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of students. All have high expectations for students to achieve and develop in all aspects of their lives.

The head of care has been sharing information and offering support to another residential special school. This school is trying to achieve the same standards of care and education as this school.

The strengths and weaknesses of the school are well known and documented in development plans. Every year sees sustained improvements which benefit students. Recently, a forest school site has been developed, offering opportunities for students to learn outdoors and gain independence skills. There is also a new support hub for students in the school, which is used by students if they are struggling in class or may be just need someone to talk to.

Regular monitoring and data collection allow for the school to demonstrate the progress made by students. Target-setting and review stem from these assessments and provide for individual bespoke packages of education and care support, maximising students' potential for achievement.

Staff enjoy their work; they report feeling valued and respected. The training and supervision provided enable staff to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively. Specialist training can be provided quickly in response to the specific needs of students. Staff also have a wealth of activity qualification which enables the provision of varied and exciting activities. Several staff have beach lifeguard

qualifications, whereas others are qualified in weightlifting, wall climbing and forest school skills, to name just a few.

Managers and governors report that the financial provision for the school limits their ability to provide the additional staffing they would like to support students' progress.

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: SC022231

Executive principal: Keith Bennett

Head of boarding/residential provision: Gareth MacIver

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

Janice Hawtin, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Denise Jolly, Social Care Inspector

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