

Frewen College

Frewen Educational Trust Ltd, Frewen College, Brickwall, Rye Road, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6NL

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Frewen College is an independent day and residential special school for children aged between seven and 19 years. The school provides specialist education for children with dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, sensory integration or speech and communication difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were 134 pupils on roll and 28 residential pupils. Boys live in the main school building and girls in a separate house in the school grounds.

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 November 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account good

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 18 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Residential students enjoy their boarding experience. They develop meaningful friendships and benefit from living in residential accommodation which promotes their progress and self-esteem. Mutual support for each other is embedded in the culture of the school. All students are aware of each other's strengths and vulnerabilities and offer support and reassurance to each other when it is needed.

Residential students benefit from a team of residential staff who understand them and provide warm, nurturing care and advice. Relationships between staff and the students are strong and develop, in most cases, over a number of years. This leads to trust and consistency and helps the students make significant progress, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. One student said, 'They're all here to help. Boarding has been a great adventure.'

Residential students enjoy varied and enriching activities both in the school and in the community. Outings are truly enjoyed, with weekend activities, such as trips to London, being particularly popular.

The routines and rules do not always enable older students to test some of their independent travel skills. Although individual residential students have different abilities and vulnerabilities, there are some who could benefit from developing these skills further, with careful planning and risk management. The school is in an isolated rural location but there are opportunities for some students to overcome the restrictions this imposes. This would expand their opportunities to meet friends from college, develop confidence and learn key skills which they will need when they live independently.

Residential students are confident in expressing their views. They have a students' council as well as a boarding council where they can raise issues. Their views are considered carefully, and changes made where appropriate. For example, older students have access to their mobile phones at night, and the logo on the minibus will be altered after sustained efforts made by the students, supported by the independent visitor. These changes enable the residential students to feel they have an influence in how the residential provision is run.

Residential students' health is promoted to a very good standard. The matron has excellent knowledge of individual health and emotional needs and is a source of warmth and support to students and their parents.

Residential students are supported carefully to move on to college and from day school into the residential provision. Their abilities are assessed by a multi-disciplinary team to ensure that their individual needs can be met prior to starting their placement. Residential students have an opportunity to try out boarding at a pace they can cope with. This leads to an increased chance of success and helps the

residential students adjust to the new experience and routines. Parental feedback about the quality of care residential students receive is overwhelmingly positive.

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

Arrangements to keep residential pupils safe are sound. All members of staff know what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. Prompt, effective action is taken to implement measures to keep pupils safe when necessary. This includes the involvement of external safeguarding agencies if needed.

The designated safeguarding lead has a thorough understanding and knowledge of any issues which may signify future concerns, such as escalating behaviour and how this may be a symptom of other issues which may have an impact on pupils or their families. He advocates strongly on behalf of families so that they receive assistance from local authorities before an issue of concern escalates into a crisis.

Local authority safeguarding professionals report that any concerns are shared promptly. School leaders seek advice and guidance if necessary, to ensure that the correct steps are taken to keep students safe at the school and in the wider community.

The use of sanctions is rare. The head of boarding ensures that an emphasis is placed on restorative and reparative practice so that pupils can make amends for any shortfalls in behaviour. This positive behaviour management enables the residential pupils to understand, reflect and learn from incidents rather than being punished.

Residential pupils report that bullying is not a problem in their small community. Occasional disputes and disagreements are monitored closely and restorative meetings held to resolve any incidents. However, the recording of these sessions is not consistent. Although this shortfall has not had an impact on students' safety it undermines evidence of the efforts made by staff and the opportunity to record the students' views.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of boarding provides clear strong leadership and holds the well-being of the residential students at the centre of her practice. She knows each student's strengths and weaknesses and makes strenuous efforts to help them develop confidence, experience success and to enjoy being part of the residential community.

A significant strength of this provision is the shared multi-disciplinary knowledge of each student's needs. Close communication across the whole campus, including teaching staff, speech and language therapists, a counsellor and residential staff, means that carefully considered and planned support can be put in place promptly and effectively, especially during times of challenge for any student.

Records of individual progress made by residential students are not always detailed. This is a missed opportunity to provide a more consistent and clearer picture of how students are benefiting from their time in the residential provision.

While supervision and appraisal take place for each member of staff involved in the residential provision, the head of boarding has not received formal supervision in line with the school's policy. Although this has not affected her effectiveness, it is a missed opportunity to record and consider the stresses of the role and to reflect on practice in the residential setting.

Training for staff is varied and they report good levels of support from their leaders. Staff with specific boarding responsibilities have not yet received training on working with students with dyslexia. Although this has not compromised the quality of care, learning in this area will strengthen staff members' understanding of the challenges faced by the residential students.

Monitoring visits are undertaken by an independent visitor. These assess the effectiveness of the residential provision and whether residential students are being kept safe. It also provides a forum for the students to share their views. Reports written after these visits are clear and outline any shortfalls or areas for improvement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as a temporary measure, visits were undertaken by the governor responsible for the oversight of the residential provision. This was a pragmatic and innovative approach which ensured that residential students were still able to voice their feelings and views to an independent visitor.

Feedback from external stakeholders, such as parents and the local safeguarding team, is very positive. Communication is described as regular and of a good standard. This increases trust and ensures a good flow of information, which in turn ensures that all students' welfare is being promoted and protected.

Members of staff make strenuous efforts to support residential students and will advocate strongly on their behalf. One example of very good practice, in relation to a student's guardian placement, had not been recorded. Recording of progress for individual residential students is not always detailed and, despite feedback from parents, the students themselves and members of staff, it is not evidenced in written reports. This lack of evidence undersells the effectiveness of efforts made by staff on behalf of the students in their care.

The management of COVID-19 has been well planned and supported residential students to return to school with an understanding of measures taken to keep everyone safe. Consequently, residential students have been eased back into the residential provision in a well-planned and sensitive manner.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff receive training that focuses on meeting the specific needs of boarders. In particular, ensure that they undertake appropriate training on the impact of dyslexia on students. ('Residential special schools, national minimum standards', 19.1)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision for staff, particularly that for the head of boarding, is fully aligned to the supervision policy. ('Residential special schools, national minimum standards', 19.6)
- The registered person should ensure that the key records outlined in Appendix 2 are up to date and accurate, especially the recording of students' progress in the residential provision and the recording of restorative meetings between students after significant incidents. ('Residential special schools, national minimum standards, 22.2)
- The registered person should ensure that residential pupils have individual independence plans which enable them to develop life skills such as independent travel. ('Residential special schools, national minimum standards', 2.8)

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: SC049345

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Nick Goodman

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspectors

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