

Pencalenick Residential Special School

Pencalenick School, St Clement, Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TE

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Pencalenick School is an academy trust school providing for 173 children with complex communication and learning disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder. Thirty-three children from the age of 11 up to the age of 16 make use of the boarding facility which is open Monday to Thursday. They may stay for up to four nights a week. The school is situated within a large country estate with extensive grounds, near the city of Truro. The boarding accommodation takes up part of two floors in the main school building.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

The head of boarding has been in post for 33 years and has relevant qualifications.

Inspection dates: 5 and 7 July 2022

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: 5 July 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Good-quality care and support is provided to children. Meaningful warm and friendly relationships exist between children and those looking after them. Children enjoy their time in the boarding provision. They appear happy and engaged in the opportunities on offer.

There is a relaxed atmosphere. Children can make friends and the adults encourage fun and laughter. For many children, this is their only opportunity to mix with peers outside of the school day. Careful induction to the boarding provision and the matching of children staying together enhance their experiences and assure the success of these overnight stays.

All children attend full-time education provision in the school. The boarding provision offers additional opportunities for learning and building independence skills. Progress in these areas is audited termly to inform target planning and ensure continuing progress for children. New skills learned in the boarding provision are often then used at home.

Parents are positive about the boarding provision. Many comment about how their child has grown in confidence and are doing more for themselves since boarding. A parent commented, 'I consider boarding as almost essential in providing social time with peers and opportunities for independence.' Children are working towards, or have achieved, recognised awards in independence skills. Awards in horticulture skills are also available. Children learn about meal preparation and making use of leisure time. From September, an award will be available in these two subjects.

Children enjoy a range of activities. A good selection of arts, crafts and games is available within the boarding provision. The school grounds are extensive, and this year children have made best use of a large polytunnel to grow fruit and vegetable. Children also get out and about. Amongst the activities on offer, they choose parks, walks in the countryside and time on the beach, as well as visits to the cinema. This year, they have been able to access a charity-based organisation which takes children out on a speed boat. Children have had opportunities to steer the boat and have encountered dolphins and had some successful fishing opportunities.

Children are consulted daily about aspects of their stay in the boarding provision. In addition, a recent survey also collected their thoughts about future developments and the changes they want. Aside from less vegetables at mealtimes and a science laboratory to do experiments, some requests have already been sorted out, and there is potential for implementing more use of the gym and swimming lessons.

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

Children feel safe and can thrive in the boarding environment.

Essential information about children is collected from stakeholders, including parents and children, to inform risk assessments. Knowing the children from the school environment also enables risk management. Staff understand the children that get on well together and careful matching reduces any risk of conflict.

Behaviour is well managed, and clear boundaries exist around expectations. Regular praise and encouragement influences children's behaviour and their development. Staff are skilled at recognising anxiety or distress and can distract children to avoid incidents. Children can tell staff if they are unwell or have any concerns, and they trust staff to act in their best interests.

Staff respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns, consult with specialist agencies and provide additional support to children where needed. Safeguarding incidents are rare.

Health and safety are well managed in the school with the support of specialist agencies where appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The boarding provision is managed by an experienced, qualified and dedicated individual with the support of a deputy manager and the wider academy trust. All adults are motivated to provide the best opportunities for children. The services provided are as described in the statement of purpose.

Leaders, managers and staff have rallied to avoid any disruption to children during the impact of COVID-19 and ongoing recruitment issues affecting staffing. Action has been taken to address recruitment issues, and this task has now been passed to an established recruitment agency. A core team of staff continues to safeguard children in providing the care and support needed. Direct work with children and avoiding any disruption to their stay in the boarding provision has been prioritised. Issues around staffing have hindered some updates to records.

The progress of children is recorded and analysed each school term. Plans to capture progress information electronically have been introduced, but are not yet embedded in practice.

The strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision are well known. Development plans are robust. Some developments have been delayed by staff shortages and other unavoidable issues, and these developments are carried over to the new school year.

Most staff received the support training and supervision needed to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Although supported through regular formal and informal meetings, the head of care has not been receiving regular supervision.

The boarding environment has seen a substantial investment in the last 12 months. Major refurbishment work is booked to take place during the summer holiday. This includes new carpets and a new, fitted kitchen.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the head of care receives regular formal supervision.
- The school should implement succession planning effectively to avoid gaps in the sufficiency of staffing.

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: SC041223

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Gary Oak

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01872 520385

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Inspector

Janice Hawtin, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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