

# Chalk Hill

Cats Lane, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2SF

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

Chalk Hill is a residential alternative provision academy for boys aged between eight and 14 who have been permanently excluded, or are at risk of permanent exclusion, from mainstream school.

The school is in a residential area of Sudbury, Suffolk. There are 14 pupils on roll, of which 12 children can use the residential provision. One child is currently using the residential provision for two nights a week.

The head of the residential provision has been in post since 2015. She has the relevant experience and qualifications to manage the residential provision. The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

### Inspection dates: 17 to 19 October 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:** 22 March 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## **Inspection judgements**

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

At the time of this inspection, the residential provision was only open for two nights per week. This was due to ongoing staffing shortages that are being addressed. In addition to the three children who have boarded overnight since the last inspection, some children have accessed activities with a view to them being able to stay overnight in the future.

Children like boarding at the school. Staff build nurturing relationships with children and support them to make progress in different areas of their lives.

Children's educational progress is improved by boarding. Children who board have better school attendance and better educational outcomes in comparison to day pupils. One child's teacher identified the child starting to board as a turning point in how well they were able to engage in their education. Staff prioritise children's education and this has helped children to achieve better outcomes in this area.

One child has made significant progress in their relationships with peers and staff in the time that they have boarded. The child had struggled to build positive relationships when they first came to the school. However, their class teacher said that since they have been boarding, the child has flourished in terms of how they interact with others. A parent of another child said that, when they were boarding, staff had helped their child to improve their day-to-day routines.

Children enjoy a wide variety of activities. These include on-site activities such as sports, as well as many community-based activities. These give children a variety of experiences, including ones that they may not have if they did not board.

Children's placement plans contain information about how staff will ensure that children's needs are met. However, the plans are not always updated to reflect children's EHC plans. One child's EHC plan contained clear information about how best to communicate with the child, but this information had not been considered when updating their placement plan. This means that information relevant to supporting children is not always clear to the staff who are caring for them.

Feedback from children about their experiences of boarding is not routinely sought. While children are very positive about their experiences, a failure to explore their views further means that areas for improvement could be missed. Although there are plans for staff to hold more formalised sessions with children which would be used to gain their views, these are not yet in place.

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

Staff understand the risks to children and manage these effectively. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and know how to

respond to any concerns. Children's risk assessments are detailed and contain clear strategies to manage risks. Staff work in line with these to keep children safe.

Behavioural incidents are very rare. Staff respond to children at times of distress or anxiety in ways that help children to calm. This prevents the escalation of incidents and helps children feel safe. The use of physical intervention is also rare. When physical intervention has been used, it has been done so appropriately by trained staff. Follow-up work takes place following incidents to identify learning.

When there have been safeguarding concerns, these have been responded to well, with prompt referrals being made to the local authority. When managers have not been happy with responses to concerns, they have followed these up with the local authority. This demonstrates a clear commitment to safeguarding and a willingness to advocate for children to ensure that they receive the services they need.

Staff set clear expectations in relation to behaviour. Children understand the boundaries that are in place. Reward systems are used to recognise positive behaviours. Staff work with education staff to ensure consistency in expectations of behaviour. Children know what is expected of them and are proud when their achievements are recognised.

Some concerns have been raised recently in relation to the health and safety of the school building. Leaders and managers are working with professional partners to address these. However, one issue relating to the suitability of fire doors was also raised in a previous fire risk assessment. This was followed up previously, but managers failed to escalate concerns when a suitable response was not received. Appropriate actions are now being taken, but the failure to do so earlier meant that the concerns were not addressed at the earliest opportunity.

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

The head of care for boarding is suitably experienced and qualified to a relevant level 5. She has a clear vision for the residential provision and a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development.

Significant staffing issues have led to the boarding provision being reduced to only two days per week. This decision has meant that, although the number of children accessing boarding and the time they spend in boarding is reduced, they continue to be looked after by experienced staff who know them well.

Managers are a visible presence in the school and regularly work shifts. This has enabled them to build strong relationships with children. Staff feel well supported and said that managers are available to them when needed. Supervision sessions help staff to think about how the care that they provide to children can be improved.

Staff undertake a wide range of training. Training is relevant to children's individual needs. Recent training has included courses on how childhood trauma affects

children. This was part of wider work to ensure that staff practise in a trauma-informed way. Induction of staff is thorough and personalised, and places emphasis on how staff are developing in their roles. Induction enables managers to recognise staff's strengths and areas in which they can develop further. Good-quality training and induction help increase staff's knowledge and develop their practice.

Managers have good relationships with external professionals as well as parents. Parents are updated weekly by way of a letter about their child's week. These letters include an overview of their child's time in boarding, what they have been doing and any progress that they have made. If there are any concerns in relation to children, these are quickly shared with parents as well as professionals when needed. Managers work with others to address concerns.

Managers have good monitoring systems in place. They have good oversight of any incidents and ensure that communication with school staff is regular and effective. Monitoring reports identify strengths of the boarding provision and areas in which improvements can be made. Managers take action to improve the care provided to children when needed.

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

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- There is a written plan in place for each child resident in the school setting out how their day-to-day needs will be met, known as the placement plan. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the EHC plan and reflects any changes to the EHC plan. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 7.1)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 15.2)

### **Point for improvement**

- School leaders should ensure that there are effective systems in place to gain and respond to feedback from children about their experiences of boarding.

## **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:** 2640599

**Headteacher:** Graham Alcock

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Joe Cox, Social Care Inspector

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