

Education and residential inspection summary for West Heath School

Ashgrove Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1SR

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

Outcome

The education overall effectiveness judgement is: Outstanding

The judgement for the experiences and progress of children in the residential provision is: Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

- Pupils are extremely positive about their school. Some take time to settle and develop trusting relationships with their peers and staff. Often, this is due to pupils having had unsettling experiences in previous schools. Staff know this. They expect the best from all pupils but are sensitive when pupils struggle. This includes in the school's health, education, assessment and revitalising therapy (HEART) department, where pupils enjoy additional expert support for their complex needs.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well, even when struggling to regulate their emotions and anxieties. Staff are adept at managing this and refocusing pupils when there are potential problems. Older pupils set a good example for their younger peers. Discussions with pupils showed them to be positive about what the school offers. They like the staff, including therapists, who they say have great patience and help to keep them safe.
- All staff work hard to build pupils' resilience and self-esteem. This was typified by one teacher describing the need to be 'emotionally astute' and the absolute imperative for staff to be 'clever at reading the learners and understand their needs, including their many barriers to achieving'. Inspectors found this to be the case.

The inspectors **did not make any recommendations** to help the school improve.

The school **meets all of the independent school standards.**

What is it like to stay at this school?

- Life at the school is significantly enhanced for those children who access the residential provision. Not only do children make progress educationally, but they also develop their independence and self-care skills. They are supported by a staff team who show love and nurture and have a deep understanding about those in their care. Parents are positive about the personalised support for children. One commented, 'Staff know how to support every child, and this has helped [my child] to grow and become more independent.'
- Children who have only recently started in the residential provision have already started to make progress. Diligent planning has ensured that these children fitted into their house seamlessly. They have developed good relationships with the children already living there and are learning to cook and improve their self-care skills. One child's mother was positive about her child's experience and the progress they have made after such a short time.
- Children who have accessed the residential provision for longer have made significant progress from their starting points because of the skills they have learned. One parent was keen to tell the inspector, 'If my child didn't have residential they would be laid in bed doing nothing. They now communicate with me and hug me. They used to feel imprisoned at home. My child was existing three years ago and now they are living.'
- Staff are skilled at supporting the children they care for. Children benefit from the rich variety of resources available at the school. The school therapy team helps inform staff practice and, when required, external specialists help staff to develop further. For example, staff have recently completed gender diversity training with a specialist agency. This has created a safe environment for children to explore their gender and identity without fear of discrimination or judgement.
- An active student council gives children a forum to take their ideas for change to leaders, but also allows children to develop communication skills such as public speaking. Children raise things they wish to change; leaders listen, explain how their ideas will be considered and encourage children to be a part of the process. This empowers children and makes them feel valued.
- One of the recommendations made at the last inspection related to the maintenance of children's bedrooms. Staff have acted on this, and each child has a clean, well-presented space to use. Staff have creatively used a play tent in one child's room, which has positively supported the child to improve their night-time routine and sleep pattern.

The school **meets all the national minimum standards.**

The inspectors **did not make any recommendations** to help the school improve.

- View the full inspection report for the education provision:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/27/131611>
- View the full inspection report for the residential provision:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/10/SC024063>



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