

The Caldecott School

Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6PW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The Caldecott School is a non-maintained special school which provides a service for day and residential pupils between the ages of seven and 16 years of age. It is a school for pupils who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties and who may in addition have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autistic spectrum disorder. The residential provision can accommodate up to 10 pupils. At the time of this inspection, there were four pupils in residence.

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

Inspection dates: 31 January to 2 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **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 last inspection: 23 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children benefit from receiving high standards of care in a nurturing environment. They form trusting relationships with the staff, who understand their individual needs and their complex behaviours. The staff were observed sensitively supporting the children to overcome any anxieties they might be experiencing, while maintaining the boundaries and expectations of group living. Mealtimes are sociable occasions when the children interact positively with the staff in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

There is a strong commitment to hearing the children's views of the residential provision. Each child has an individual weekly meeting with a member of staff where they are supported to express their feelings on how their week has been. The records from these meetings indicate that the children feel safe and there are no ongoing concerns around bullying. Despite this good practice, more could be done to raise the children's awareness of independent advocacy services and how these can be accessed.

The children are all making good progress across many aspects of their lives, even though sometimes a child may experience the occasional setback. Common areas of significant progress relate to acquiring new social skills and managing difficult emotions more effectively. Over time, the children present with more positive behaviours and serious incidents become fewer. When reflecting on the unsafe situations her child might have placed himself in, before becoming a residential pupil, one parent commented, 'He is a changed boy. It's amazing how the staff have contained him so well.'

The children also make significant progress in their education. Many of the children have previously struggled in educational establishments, resulting in significant periods out of school. All the children now have excellent attendance records. When difficulties do arise, the residential staff work closely with teaching staff to ensure there is a plan for settling the child. In addition, the children are learning valuable independence skills, which greatly improves their self-esteem.

The children have excellent access to therapeutic services and specialist workers to support their development. One child spoke positively about the relationship they have with their counsellor and how they have been able to discuss sensitive issues and find some resolution. Equal importance is given to the children's physical health, with targets being set for how a healthy lifestyle can be achieved. The recording and administration of medication are effective and positive action has been taken in response to the recommendation made at the last inspection regarding taking medication to and from a child's home.

The children have opportunities to enjoy new and exciting activities, such as horse riding or going on theatre trips. Other children have been encouraged and supported to join local clubs. Although this has not always been successful, the staff continue to strive towards the children broadening their experience of the community resources available to them.

Careful planning is undertaken to ensure that children accessing the residential provision for the first time are welcomed sensitively and put at their ease. This helps them to familiarise themselves with the daily routines and settle quickly. The staff quickly build positive working relationships with the children's parents and carers. The parents who spoke to the inspector during this inspection unanimously praised the staff for the support they had received in helping to implement the support strategies used in school at the child's home. In all cases, this has resulted in significant improvements to family life and the quality of the relationships the children have with their parents and carers.

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

All the children say they feel safe in the residential provision. This can be partly attributed to the trusting relationships they build with the residential care staff. The children develop the confidence to share any worries or concerns they may have with the staff, and this is a strong protective factor. The staff take prompt and effective action whenever they become aware that a child could come to harm. The staff monitor the children closely and they demonstrate good levels of professional curiosity whenever they hear or observe anything that could indicate a child's welfare could be compromised.

The staff are familiar with each child's vulnerabilities and there are effective strategies in place to manage the associated risks. The children's individual risk assessments are kept under review, and they are updated promptly to reflect any significant change in circumstances. The individual risk assessments take into account the potential for the children to become exploited, in the community or online.

No children have gone missing from the residential provision since the last inspection. There is clear guidance for the staff to follow should a child go missing from the premises in the future.

Overall, the managers and staff maintain effective communication with external safeguarding professionals. Managers engage positively with child protection professionals and make a valuable contribution to safety planning when this becomes necessary. There was one occasion when this good standard of partnership working was not maintained. Communication with a local authority designated officer was not thorough and information was not shared in a timely way. This did not impact on a child's safety and was an isolated occurrence.

The children are supported to explore their identities in an open and honest environment where difference is celebrated. There are no indications that the children experience any form of bullying in the residential provision. The staff are skilled in maintaining appropriate boundaries and they address effectively any negative comments made by the children.

There is a highly effective behaviour management model embedded throughout the school. The children have comprehensive and personalised behaviour support plans which provide the staff with the guidance needed to ensure consistency across this area of practice. The use of physical intervention to manage behaviour is kept to a minimum and only used in accordance with statutory guidance. The debriefs that are undertaken with children following a physical intervention provide excellent opportunities for them to reflect on what has happened and explore alternative ways to manage their emotions in challenging situations. For most of the children, the number of physical interventions that are required significantly reduces over time.

There are effective systems in place for monitoring the physical environment. This ensures that the children's safety is not compromised due to avoidable hazards going undetected.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The residential provision is exceptionally well managed by an experienced and committed manager. The manager aspires to exceed the national minimum standards for residential special schools and in many areas of practice this has been achieved. He is supported by a dedicated and stable team of residential staff, providing sufficient cover to ensure that the children's complex needs are met.

There are highly effective systems in place for monitoring the quality of care being provided. All serious incidents are reviewed by the manager or a member of the senior leadership team. The standard of external monitoring is particularly high. The independent visitor places strong emphasis on how well the children are being safeguarded. He regularly consults the children to obtain their views on the residential provision and produces detailed reports which are focused on maintaining high standards and developing practice.

Comprehensive placement plans are developed for all the children. These set clear and achievable goals for the child. The individual work that the staff do with each child is focused on supporting the child to reach their goals. This increases the child's confidence in being able to achieve the goals that have been set. Their progress is well recorded, and this provides strong evidence of how the child has benefited from becoming a residential pupil.

The manager ensures that any child being admitted to the residential provision will be a suitable match with the other children. The impact risk assessment process is highly effective at determining whether there is likely to be any negative impact on the group dynamics. The process takes account of the needs and vulnerabilities of all

the children. Consideration is also given to whether the staff have the knowledge and skills to work effectively with the child being referred.

The staff have access to a range of support systems to enable them to meet the responsibilities of their role. They receive regular good-quality supervision and feel that communication with the manager is positive. The staff also attend fortnightly meetings with the school's child psychotherapist. This provides them with the opportunity to reflect on the strategies they are using to support the children and develop a better understanding of the children's needs and behaviours. There is a strong focus on the staff team dynamics in these meetings. This is in recognition of how the children could be affected by any unresolved issues within the team. The staff are supportive of each other and they work collaboratively. This can be attributed to the support mechanisms in place.

There is a comprehensive staff training package, which is focused on meeting the specific needs of the children in the residential provision. Any gaps in a member of staff's training record are quickly identified and rectified within reasonable timescales.

The residential house is an integral part of the school's provision. The headteacher maintains good oversight of the service being provided and has a strong presence in the house. During this inspection, she was observed sensitively supporting one of the residential pupils to plan how to reintegrate into lessons after the child had been struggling with some aspects of the school routine.

There is also effective oversight from the governing body. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding regularly visits the residential provision. How the residential provision is functioning is a standard item for discussion at governors' meetings. The governor who was spoken to during this inspection demonstrated good knowledge of the individual needs and circumstances of the children living in the residential house.

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

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that the children receive information regarding independent advocacy services and how they can access these.
- School leaders should ensure that effective liaison takes place with the local authority designated officer.

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: 1276600

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Stacey McShane

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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