

Parkwood Hall Co-operative Academy

Parkwood Hall School, Beechenlea Lane, Swanley, Kent BR8 8DR

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

Parkwood Hall Co-operative Academy is a residential special school providing day and residential placements for pupils between the ages of eight and 19 years who have a wide range of special educational needs, such as speech, language and communication needs, moderate to severe learning difficulties, and autism spectrum disorders, and includes those with ongoing medical needs. At the time of the inspection, there were 17 residential pupils. In total, the school can accommodate 20 residential pupils. The pupils reside in residential units within the main building.

At this inspection, Ofsted only considered the residential provision.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 December 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The residential special school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of previous inspection: 2 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection there have been several heads of care, a new principal and a newly formed senior leadership team. This has had an impact on the consistency of direction to staff and residential leaders. This inconsistent direction has also extended to oversight of historical safeguarding concerns. While efforts are being made to resolve safeguarding practice, this period covered at least 10 months up to September 2022.

Despite this, students receive individualised care from a loving, caring and skilled staff team. Individual nuances of students' needs are well known and staff react and respond in an appropriate way. Staff understand students' individual communication needs well. They seamlessly transition from one child to another and ensure that all children are supported to engage. Students feel included in the school and belong.

Students make progress, and, for some, this is significant. The joint work between residential and education staff ensures that all children are supported. Children are encouraged to complete a variety of different qualifications, and this is achieved by using a clear individual student-led curriculum. This allows children to thrive.

Key workers understand students' views well, and staff continue to ensure that decisions on day-to-day care are continually offered. Students are supported to develop independence skills. These range from helping with shoelaces and cutlery to accessing wider experiences in the community, where students can begin to think about adulthood.

Students have a wide range of activities available to them, which they all choose from. These include sports, Makaton choir, independence work and trips out in the community for shopping.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there was a sustained period when the oversight of students' safety was not effective. A lack of scrutiny in record-keeping and senior leadership oversight meant that significant information and clear themes of concern were not recognised or responded to.

External scrutiny from governors and independent visitors failed to identify these concerns. Despite the lack of quality in recording having been identified, this was not challenged sufficiently. As a result, children were potentially unsafe when staying in the residential home.

New leaders have made a significant impact on the knowledge and skill of staff in relation to safeguarding. A newly appointed safeguarding lead has been swift to identify gaps in staff knowledge. Senior leaders have been able to create a robust auditing tool and there is now a good oversight of safeguarding practice.

Staff now demonstrate a good knowledge of safeguarding. Current concerns are communicated well to external safeguarding professionals. When leaders are unhappy with the outcome, this is challenged well. Individual risks for students are well understood. There are clear plans in place that are updated following any concerns or changes. These plans are across the whole provision, meaning that there is consistency throughout the school day.

Students do not go missing from the residential part of the school and they are rarely without staff support. When students run away from staff in the grounds of the school, staff are swift to react and support children immediately.

Restraint rarely happens. Staff are skilled in using de-escalation techniques and respond to cues from students to be able to manage challenging behaviour without the need for restraint. However, reports of these incidents would benefit from more accurate recording to ensure that they contain factual information instead of opinion.

Risks in the environment have not been responded to effectively. Actions identified following a visit to assess fire safety were not responded to within suggested time scales.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have a clear vision of what they are hoping to achieve for students. The new principal has made an immediate positive impact. He discovered the safeguarding issues raised above and took immediate action. He is clear about how he intends to change the culture and avoid repeating previous mistakes. The establishment of a new senior leadership team and newly appointed safeguarding lead has supported him to do this.

Residential managers demonstrate an exceptional knowledge and understanding of students, their needs and their successes. They support staff well. With changing senior leaders over recent months, residential managers have provided the consistency that has allowed students to flourish.

The residential provision is now achieving its aims and objectives, and residential leaders are clear about these. Staff are well supported through a wide range of training, regular supervision sessions and team meetings.

However, as identified above, there have been three heads of care since the last inspection. Staff are acutely aware of this and are anxious about further changes. Some staff are unsure whose advice to follow as everyone who comes in is bringing

change with them. This, combined with the fact that the current deputy principal for care is only interim, means that some staff are struggling to trust leaders and managers.

There has not been a robust response to some of the issues outlined at the previous Ofsted inspection. These were being responded to during this inspection. The statement of purpose has not been updated and finalised.

Leaders challenge external agencies well when they are unhappy about decisions. However, this challenge is only recent. As indicated above, there was a period of time when communication with other professionals was not recorded. The lack of safeguarding oversight and scrutiny from the previous principal, deputy principle for safeguarding and care, and the governing body, coupled with a lack of rigour in independent visitor reports, left the children in the residential provision in the school vulnerable.

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:

- A statement of the school's principles and practice to be known as the 'Statement of Purpose' is promoted through the school and made available to parents and carers. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 1.1)
- The statement is published on the school's website and is reviewed annually and updated where required. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 1.4)
- The school's governing body, trustees and/or proprietor monitor the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the residential and welfare provision in the school and take appropriate action where necessary. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.1)
- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school. Leaders ensure that there is a mutually supportive and reinforcing approach, between (i) the educational provision and (ii) the residential provision, which is centred around the child. Individuals working in each aspect of provision should be able to challenge each other where necessary. The school should have processes in place to ensure this is the case. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 2.5)
- The school should ensure that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 13.1)
- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured and they are provided a safe environment in which they can live and learn. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 14.2)

Points for improvement

- Restraint reports would benefit from further factual detail in recording.

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: 1159380

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Simon Collins

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

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