

Marland School

Marland School, Peters Marland, Torrington, Devon EX38 8QQ

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a local authority-maintained school. It is a member of a foundation trust with other special schools within the local authority. The school provides weekly residential care, over four nights, for up to 40 boys between the ages of eight and 16. The school provides education and care for boys who have social, emotional and/or mental health needs. At the time of this inspection, there were 29 children on roll.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

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

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: 13 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Students make excellent progress from their starting points. The staff are aspirational and ambitious for the students. Trusting and nurturing relationships with staff form the basis from which the students learn to increase their confidence and self-esteem and positively manage their own behaviour. Routines run smoothly. The students develop a sense of belonging and say that they feel part of a big family.

The school and residential staff liaise effectively and consistently. They hold twice daily meetings so that all relevant information is shared. The residential staff promote the importance of education to the students and ensure that the students arrive at school on time and are well prepared. Additional online tutoring is available after school to support students with their academic work.

Students benefit from being supported effectively to successfully gain not only academic qualifications, but also vocational qualifications, for example, in food hygiene and building, so that they have the skills to obtain holiday work or future employment. The students are also supported to learn how to ride a motorcycle and pass a motorcycle test so that they have transport to get to future employment. All students who left the school last year went on to further education, training or employment.

Older students benefit from living in an independence flat, where they learn valuable independent living skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking. The support offered to students is individualised and inclusive. The views of students are constantly obtained. These views inform their care plans and any decision-making. Students say they have gained increased confidence and self-esteem, and they learn many new skills and make friends.

A wide range of exciting and varied activities are available on the school site and in the community. These activities support the students to channel their energy positively. For example, students enjoy go-karting, hiking and cinema visits. Staff drive students to clubs in their home area, so that they can maintain links with their friends. Staff also understand that sometimes the boys need quiet time after school, so they can choose to stay in their rooms or listen to music.

The complex emotional needs of the students are met by staff who understand them and the impact that previous trauma has had on them. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the students' emotional needs. For example, a sensory room is being developed as part of the 'Thrive' programme. Staff know the boys very well and can understand why their behaviour may change, for example, if things are not going well at home. The staff liaise and communicate effectively with parents. This means parents receive all relevant information about their child and the staff

gain all necessary information about what is happening in a student's life that may adversely affect their education and behaviour.

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

Students report that they feel safe staying at the school. Their safety is promoted by the staff, who understand how to manage risks and keep the students safe. Students trust the staff and have confidence that they will listen. The staff know the boarders well and show professional curiosity and vigilance. This alerts them to any small changes in the behaviour of a student which may indicate that they are worried or upset.

Safeguarding incidents are promptly reported to safeguarding professionals and dealt with in line with the school's comprehensive safeguarding procedures. However, a documented chronology of the action that the school took to address one safeguarding incident was not fully completed, to include how a student was supported following an incident.

Students are safely supported to take age-appropriate risks that enable them to learn to keep themselves safe and build their self-esteem and confidence. For example, they can go to the cinema and youth clubs and take part in different sporting activities without staff being present.

Behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Students are supported to learn to calm themselves and use creative strategies if they feel angry or upset. Staff do not use punitive consequences or restraint but support the students to learn from any mistakes and reward them for positive behaviour. Students say that they are aware of how much their behaviour has improved and how they have learned to manage their emotions.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are aspirational for the students and successfully implement an ambitious vision and provide very strong leadership. They are relentless in their pursuit of improvement and development. Their energy and passion passes to the staff, who are motivated and committed to achieving positive outcomes for the students. The staff are very well supported by leaders and managers, so in turn they can provide exceptionally high-quality support to the students.

Staff report that they are well trained and supervised. They say that they are equipped through a comprehensive training programme with the skills they need to do their jobs. They praise the approachable nature of managers and say that they can always receive support when needed.

Leaders and managers are committed to improvement and learning. They engage with latest practice and research. For example, they are striving to become a trauma-informed school. Effective monitoring by governors and the independent visitor takes

place to inform development plans and improvements. Governors regularly visit the residential provision and have developed positive relationships with the students.

Quality monitoring is very effective and informs improvement and development. This is achieved through extensive analysis of data, to understand students' educational and emotional progress, and gaining feedback from students, staff, parents and professionals. Leaders and managers understand the school's strengths and areas for development and have plans for how they can further improve. Outcomes for the students are monitored to ensure that they are making progress and to inform how best to help them.

The residential accommodation is very well equipped and is warm and homely. Younger students now live in separate accommodation to the older students, as it was recognised that it is beneficial to separate them to best meet their different needs. Students comment very positively about their bedrooms and how much they enjoy and benefit from staying in the residential provision at the school.

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

Point for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that the chronology of any safeguarding incident is comprehensively documented and includes details of the support given to the students involved in the incident.

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: SC022231

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Keith Bennett

Type of school: Residential special school

Telephone number: 01805 601 324

Email address: admin@marland.devon.sch.uk

Inspectors

Tina Maddison, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Michelle Oxley, Social Care Inspector

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