

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. These can include 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 11 full-time residential pupils and one pupil staying part-time, one night a week. In total, the school can accommodate 20 residential pupils. The pupils reside in residential homes in the main building.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school. The inspection was part of an aligned inspection with His Majesty's Inspector of Education.

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 October 2023

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: 6 December 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in residential care. They present as happy, safe and well supported and cared for by a staff team whose members have detailed knowledge of their individual care and communication needs.

As a result of improvement made since the last inspection and an increase of staff-to-pupil ratio, pupils have made significant progress. For example, pupils who previously were unable to communicate verbally are now learning to talk and pupils who previously displayed behaviours that challenged over a sustained period have experienced a reduction in such behaviours. All pupils have experienced improved levels of engagement with staff.

Pupils are supported by staff who have innovative skills and ideas. Staff are provided with clear methods to support pupils through detailed positive behaviour strategies that inform pupils' care plans. These innovative approaches are used to further support and help children to explore issues that may be sensitive. For example, a puppet called Grandpa Burt is used as an aid to help children communicate more openly. This has helped some children to not feel ashamed or embarrassed about some topics they want to talk about.

Parents are generally positive about the experiences that pupils receive. They talk about good communication and are of the view that the residential part of the school gives pupils positive opportunities and experiences.

Education plans and targets for pupils are included in their residential care plans. This allows staff to continue to work on pupils' educational targets during social times.

Pupils talk passionately about the experiences they have in the residential provision. There is a wide range of games available as well as resources on site, such as adventure playgrounds and cycling areas. Staff have registered and set up a Scout group. This has allowed pupils to feel connected to the wider Scout community. The school Scout group has been identified as an exemplar of how to make Scouting inclusive.

Prior to a pupil moving into the residential provision, residential leaders complete thorough assessments. These include assessments of the known and presenting risks of the new pupil and include consideration of what this may mean for other pupils already staying in residential care. When leaders conclude that they are unable to safely meet the needs of a referred pupil, a comprehensive response regarding the reasons why is provided.

Pupils are supported to develop independent skills. All pupils are encouraged to carry out daily chores. Pupils also obtain independence skills through partaking in daily routines, such as preparing food and tidying their bedrooms.

The residential part of the school is appropriately decorated in terms of pupils' bedrooms and communal areas. Pupils are consulted about their wishes and their bedrooms are designed in accordance with their individual choices and needs. While the majority of the environment is well decorated, the corridors and entrance areas show signs of age and disrepair. Some damage identified was in place at the time of previous inspection. This is the first thing pupils see when coming home from school and detracts from a homely environment.

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

There has been a marked improvement to the safeguarding culture across the residential home. Staff have a better understanding of safeguarding and speak with confidence about their role in reporting safeguarding concerns. The commitment from the designated safeguarding lead and senior leaders has been instrumental to these improvements.

Designated and deputy safeguarding leads hold weekly safeguarding meetings. These ensure that there is a separate level of oversight applied to safeguarding incidents and risks. The decision to conclude a safeguarding issue is agreed by the team to avoid individual decision-making. Safeguarding meetings are also periodically attended by the safeguarding trustee to ensure that there is oversight from the trustee board.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. The introduction of a positive behaviour support programme has equipped staff with new skills to manage behaviour. This has resulted in a reduction in challenging incidents across residential provision.

Children have not gone missing from the residential provision since the last inspection. This is due to a combination of improved staff skills in managing behaviour and a higher staff-to-child ratio being implemented.

Comprehensive debriefs have been introduced following all types of incidents. This has enabled staff, managers and leaders to understand and reflect on when incidents occur and to consider learning from them. Managers have good oversight of all incidents and ensure that they comment on them and review them in a timely way.

When safeguarding concerns arise, these are shared with relevant external safeguarding agencies when required. Designated safeguarding leads are tenacious in following up with external agencies if they have not had a response or are not satisfied with the response received.

Despite the improvements to the safeguarding culture, this has not extended to recruitment practices. Since the last inspection, two new members of staff have been

recruited. However, inconsistent information was held for these individuals and needed to be followed up to ensure their suitability to work in the residential provision. When completing a broader review of recruitment in the school, it was identified that not all overseas checks had been completed. There was an assumption by those responsible for recruitment checks that the 'right to work' checks were sufficient. This lack of rigour means that for the two members of staff employed since the last inspection, safer recruitment practices were not consistently followed when assessing an applicant's suitability.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have worked diligently since the last inspection to ensure that improvements were made to staff morale. This has been successful, and the improved staff morale has benefited children's overall experiences as a result. One member of staff commented, 'I feel excited to be at the school under our current senior leadership team and am looking forward to our future as a school.'

Leaders have a good knowledge of pupils' individual needs and ensure that the information for staff is consistently reviewed and updated. Staff now take greater responsibility in the day-to-day running of the home. This is due to moving the residential lead office out of the homes and appointing an interim head of care. This has resulted in the residential staff gaining further relevant skills.

Staff are positive about the availability and support of leaders, and this extends to senior leaders of the school. Staff seek and gain informal support when required and benefit from regular and detailed supervisions and appraisals. These include ongoing discussions around staff professional development. The members of the staff team have experienced a challenging time since the last inspection but value the support of leaders.

There has been significant change to the structure and function of the board of trustees. The board is now divided so that two trustees have oversight of key areas, including the residential provision and safeguarding. Regular visits to the school, combined with detailed reports, have ensured that the trustees fulfil their role as 'critical friend.' This external scrutiny is also supported by the introduction of a new independent visitor, who provides comprehensive reports that continue to challenge and help to develop the residential provision.

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 standard for residential special schools:

- 24.1 Schools operate safer recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

- The corridors and entrances of the residential homes should be decorated to the same standard as pupils' bedrooms and communal areas of the residential provision.

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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Inspectors

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

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