

Unsted Park School

Unsted Park School, Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1UW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

The school provides specialist education and care to children aged seven to 19 years with autism spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome and associated disorders. There are currently 89 students on the school roll.

Five students were staying at the residential provision at the time of the inspection. The head of residential care has been in post for three years and has a relevant qualification as required by the national minimum standards.

This social care inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the school. At this school children are referred to as young people. The report reflects this.

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 November 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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 previous inspection: 31 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people are cared for by a dedicated, exceptionally skilled team of staff who, through strong relationships, support them to make progress. Young people trust staff and believe in themselves, taking pride in what they have achieved.

Parents speak positively about the impact that the residential provision has on their children and are clear that staff have a good understanding of their children's needs. One parent described feeling anxious about their child being away from home. However, due to how well staff communicate with them, they were reassured. Another parent described it as, 'Purely perfect for both my child and us as a family.'

Young people make significant progress in the residential provision. Staff have a good understanding of young people's individual starting points, and progress is assessed against this. Two young people have had quite incredible journeys and are now preparing for further education. Both young people previously had significant gaps in their education and were unable to engage. They are now being supported to plan for university and apply for college placements.

There is an ongoing focus on supporting young people to be prepared for adulthood. This area of practice has significantly developed since the last inspection. Young people are encouraged to budget, plan, shop and cook three meals a week. Some are also supported to safely administer their own medication. The support that is offered to young people is individualised and reflects their needs.

Young people's views are integral to the development of the residential provision. Weekly meetings and one-to-one sessions consistently provide young people with a voice regarding matters that are important to them. Young people benefit from the input of an independent advocate, who visits the home termly and spends time with all the young people. Contact details for the advocate are made available to young people so that they can contact them in between visits if required.

A wide range of activities are available to the young people. These range from attending cadets, going to the cinema, on theatre trips and attending clubs, painting, sports and games in the grounds. While activities are planned in advance with young people, staff creatively adapt these plans if required. For some young people, the ability to participate in activities in the community, is a significant success and something they enjoy.

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

Risks are well understood by staff. Clear and detailed risk assessments are in place for all young people, and staff talk confidently about them. When new risks are

identified, plans are amended accordingly and staff are updated. This means that all staff are guided by relevant and up-to-date information.

When concerns are raised by young people, these are taken seriously and responded to appropriately. When there are concerns of a serious nature, leaders report back to the internal safeguarding team, and clear action is identified and taken. Leaders work extremely well with other professionals to create a genuine team around the child. This ensures young people's safety.

Behaviour support plans and risk assessments give staff comprehensive guidance about how best to support young people. These are updated following any changes in behaviour and immediately shared with the team through handovers, team meetings and supervision.

Young people do not go missing from the residential provision. A high staff ratio, skilled staff and excellent safety awareness among young people prevent this. Staff are confident in what to do if a young person was to go missing.

When leaders identify behaviours of concern, a broad range of professionals help to support young people. The therapy team, led by a dedicated special educational needs coordinator, provides a wide range of resources to help young people. These include talking therapy, art therapy, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. In addition, there is a committed pastoral team. The team works with the residential lead to create innovative strategies, including anti-bullying. This provides consistent approaches and a high level of support for young people.

The residential lead has created a networking group with local schools. This includes special and mainstream schools. This forum enables opportunities to consider local safeguarding issues, share best practice and create an open learning experience for all. This innovative approach has helped to further enhance the strong safeguarding ethos of the school since the last inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Despite the leadership challenges in the wider school, the leadership team in the residential provision has continued to challenge themselves and young people to have high aspirations.

The headteacher is new to the school. However, they have already developed a strong working relationship with residential leaders. The headteacher carries out termly supervision and weekly visits to the residential provision and has developed effective communication with the residential team. Consequently, they have excellent oversight and understanding of the residential provision and its function.

Leaders have a comprehensive knowledge of the young people and their needs. They advocate for young people and demonstrate that they always have their best interests in mind.

The residential lead continues to challenge herself and the team to strive for further progress. For example, the head of residential care has developed a target setting and progress monitoring system. This has allowed the team to undertake reviews of young people's progress on a weekly and termly basis. This sharp focus has contributed to the rapid and sustained progress that children make.

All staff receive regular supervision sessions and appraisals. This includes night staff. There is excellent communication to ensure that any areas of concern are quickly raised with the leadership team. Staff have access to a wide range of training that is individualised to their own learning requirements, and which supports them to meet the needs of young people exceptionally well.

Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the residential provision. External monitoring through independent visitor inspections and commissioned audits provides the opportunity for leaders to continually learn. Leaders readily use feedback from these sources to further enhance 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: SC363144

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Shane Kenny

Type of school: Residential special school

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Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

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