

# Alfriston School

Alfriston School, Penn Road, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire HP9 2TS

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this residential special school**

Alfriston School is a day and weekly boarding special school for girls aged 11 to 18 with moderate learning difficulties. The school may also help girls to overcome emotional difficulties and minor mobility and sensory disabilities. Boarders stay at the school for three nights each week, from Monday to Thursday.

At the time of inspection 16 children were using the residential provision.

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

### **Inspection dates: 30 January to 1 February 2024**

**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:** 21 March 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children enjoy their time in the residential provision. They have made close friendships with each other, and there is a strong sense of togetherness. A small staff team builds trusting relationships with children, encouraging them to try new things and develop their social skills. Children are increasing in confidence and self-esteem as a result.

Children benefit from a range of well-structured activities. They look forward to cooking together on a Wednesday night. This is a fantastic social occasion where all the children contribute to the cooking and eating of a shared meal with staff. Children enjoy weekly attendance at a youth club, where they can spend time together and with other children who do not attend the school. Children also enjoy a range of activities such as board games, shopping, colouring, cinema trips and day trips to theme parks.

Staff ensure that children attend school regularly. They place importance on children practicing independence skills learned in school. Children can stay in an independence flat where they can practice life skills such as shopping and cooking their meals. Staff prepare children for adulthood effectively by encouraging them to use public transport and get involved with voluntary groups. One parent said that every time their child comes home, they see a change and growth.

The children benefit from a multidisciplinary team onsite. The team consists of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. The lead of this service has excellent oversight of the children's health needs. This team provides an integrated approach to the child's care to meet their health and well-being needs. Close working with external agencies ensures children's health needs are assessed and specialist support is provided.

Children are regularly consulted about their experiences in the residential setting. Staff complete an individual review with each child as well as weekly group meetings. Children can choose the activities and meals for the week. They feel listened to and involved in the day-to-day decisions. Children know who the independent listener is, and they have met with them to share their views.

The accommodation is well furnished and spacious. The large communal areas allow the children to spend time together in a comfortable and homely environment. Children's mattresses have been replaced recently and are comfortable, promoting good sleep.

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

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has trained staff well. Staff are confident in identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns. Staff report concerns to the DSL,

and prompt action is taken to address any worries. The DSL provides regular briefings and updates to staff to ensure their knowledge is kept up to date.

Staff are acutely aware of the areas of vulnerability for the children that they care for. They understand children's worries and hold 'pupil focus' meetings to help ensure that children are supported in the right way to help them stay safe. Children's written risk assessments are not always accurate. One child's needs have changed, and they have had time away from the residential provision. The child's risk assessment has not been updated to reflect new and emerging risks.

Staff help children understand social rules and promote positive relationships. They use a restorative approach with children, and this helps them to be considerate of others and make amends. This helps to nurture their social skills. The head of pastoral care has good oversight of incidents involving children. These are monitored for patterns and trends to provide individualised support for children. Physical intervention has only been used once with a child. This is well recorded, and following the incident, a debrief took place with the child.

Medications are not managed in line with the school's policy. Medications are stored in drawers with other items such as batteries. One child's medication was not stored in the original packaging and was not recorded on the child's records. The independent visitor has identified these shortfalls, and leaders have an action plan in place to improve this. There has been no impact on children and no recorded medication errors.

The business director has well-developed systems in place for ensuring that the children stay in a healthy and safe environment. However, the residential provision and school safeguarding policy has not been updated to reflect recent changes in statutory guidance.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Leaders have high aspirations for children and are determined to help children become independent and reach their potential. Senior leaders regularly eat meals with children and stay over in the residential provision. They are present and active figures during the children's overnight stays.

The head of care is deeply invested in the children. She has strong relationships with them and is highly regarded by her staff team. A parent spoke highly of the head of care's ability to build warm and trusting relationships with the children.

An independent visitor has recently been appointed. The visitor was appointed in line with the school's safer recruitment processes. The visitor is highly experienced and has completed one visit to the school. The visitor produced a detailed report, which has been shared with the senior leaders. Leaders are committed to the independent scrutiny and are responding to the actions raised.

Leaders have strong oversight of new admissions to the residential provision. They meet weekly to discuss admissions and review the progress of new children. These meetings are a constructive forum, providing leaders with strong oversight of the children's progress.

Staff receive regular supervision each term. They report being well supported through supervision. Leaders have reviewed the supervision template to include more discussions about staff welfare. Staff are trained to carry out their roles in boarding in relation to meeting the children's individual needs.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care their children receive. A parent described their child's progress with their emotional health as 'off the scale' and said that the school is very well led by a 'fantastic' head teacher. Professionals report close working relationships with those children who have social care involvement. Staff contribute to children's meetings and share concerns about children's welfare promptly.

Governors responsible for oversight of the residential provision are effective in their roles. They are knowledgeable and trained to carry out their roles. They visit the boarding provision regularly and produce reports following their visits. The reports include conversations with children to gather their views about boarding. Governors produce actions for the head of care to complete.

Each child has a written plan of care. The plans are not always reviewed to include the most up-to-date information about children's needs. Some details are missing from plans, such as whether the child is subject to a child protection plan and the children's parents' names.

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

### **Points for improvement**

- Leaders and managers should update safeguarding policies reflect the most up to date national legislation.
- Ensure children's plans are updated in response to their changing needs and circumstances.
- Leaders and manager should ensure that medication is managed and administered in line with the provider policy.

### **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:** SC023097

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mrs Jinna Male

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspectors**

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector

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