

The Caldecott School

Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6PW

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this residential special school

This is a non-maintained special school which provides a service for day and residential children between the ages of seven and 16 years of age. It is a school for children who experience social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties and who may also have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism. The residential provision can accommodate up to 10 children. At the time of this inspection, there were three children in residence.

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

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 November 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: 28 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has been supported to join the residential provision following a successful transition plan. There is careful consideration of any new children that may come to stay at the residential school. This includes an extensive assessment process, visits to children and a collaborative approach with their families, carers and professional networks.

The children all continue to make good progress. This ranges from support by staff to learn independent skills, such as cooking, and how children make developments with their social and emotional well-being. All of the children contribute their views to their placement plans, which guide staff on how to support them with their daily routines, targets and progress. These plans are regularly updated to reflect changes to the children's ongoing development.

All of the children are attending school, and there is excellent communication with the school staff and the residential staff to provide consistent support for the children to help them make progress. The children all feed back that they like going to school and have positive friendships with other children, which is important to them.

The home is large, bright and spacious with ample areas for children to learn, play and relax. Each of the children has personalised areas of the home to suit their sensory needs. For example, one child has a pickleball room to play in when they may be feeling overwhelmed. This personal approach to support children helps them to manage if they feel under stress and to relax.

The head of boarding ensures that children's experiences are adapted to their specialist interests so that they make continued progress and build positive relationships with staff. Children enjoy a range of activities and experiences during their stays. The staff give the children regular opportunities to share their views, and children can decide what activities they would like to do, such as trampolining, cinema trips, bike rides and visits with friends. The children have regular discussions with staff about how their week is going, what they have enjoyed and any worries they may have.

The children can confidently say who they would talk to within the staff team if they are unhappy or worried about something. However, there are no arrangements for an independent person to visit the children to provide them with an external person to contact should they wish. Therefore, this standard is not met.

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

The staff are aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe and can demonstrate how they follow safeguarding practice. If they are concerned about a child, they escalate this to the head of boarding, who ensures that appropriate risk

measures are in place. For example, when one child's behaviour became a worry, the family was supported to explore therapeutic input and funding for this to take place. This has led to the child receiving the appropriate support to promote their emotional well-being.

The staff know the children well and have forged good relationships. This helps the staff to be responsive and alert to children's changing behaviours. The staff rarely use physical interventions to support children's behaviour, preferring to use effective de-escalation techniques which are personalised for each child. The staff also work in partnership with children's families and carers to ensure that they are supported with consistent routines and boundaries. This has helped children to be more settled when they are at home.

The head of boarding ensures that there is a collaborative approach to keeping children safe and will escalate any concerns to the relevant professionals. They advocate for the children and their families to ensure they have the support needed to maintain safe relationships when not at the residential provision. Any concerns are reported and responded to by the head of boarding and the wider safeguarding team to ensure that children are safeguarded. However, senior leaders lacked professional curiosity in one isolated example of safeguarding processes to ensure that records captured decision-making and reflection on how an allegation from a child was managed. Senior leaders reflected on this during the inspection and what learning there was from this to inform future practice.

Arrangements are in place as a contingency should any of the children need support for their health while staying at the residential school. However, there are shortfalls in the management of children's medicine. For example, one child has not received their medication as prescribed, and a recording error had not been identified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of boarding is invested in all of the children's well-being and experiences, and this extends to when they leave. For example, he has continued input and support for one child for over a year since they left the home. This helped them to make a successful transition into a new school, ensuring effective liaison with this child's new school to support them to settle.

There is a small, consistent staff team to support the children. The head of boarding ensures the staff have regular supervision and annual appraisal. All of the staff have completed their mandatory training and have a suitable qualification for their role or are working towards this in the required timescale.

The head of boarding has well-established and effective systems to ensure he has oversight of the children's care and day-to-day events. This includes regular monitoring of children's records and quality assurance processes. Feedback from the children's families and professional networks is positive and praises the communication between them and the staff and the ongoing support for the children.

The school has appointed a dedicated governor to have responsibility of the oversight of the residential provision. This has included visits to the home and an overview of safeguarding arrangements as well as spending time with the children. The residential school is a standing item at each of the governors' meetings, and the head of boarding and headteacher provide an overview of the residential provision to inform the meetings.

Managers ensure that the necessary checks have been carried out as required for staff. However, the process for the appointment of governors and trustees is not included in the school's policies, and there is a shortfall in the due diligence of these checks where information highlighted has raised issues worthy of being explored.

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:

- All medication is safely and securely stored and accurate records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the children to whom they are prescribed. Staff are suitably trained to administer a child's medication as appropriate. Children allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. Where applicable, schools have regard to statutory guidance. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 12.8)
- The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. Children know who this person is, know how to contact them and feel comfortable talking to them. The person is easily accessible at all reasonable times, visits regularly (at least monthly), and knows the children. The person should have the necessary skills to interact and communicate effectively with the children and be able to recognise good/poor care and safeguarding concerns. Children who cannot communicate verbally are given the means to request individual support. Schools may need to make a range of arrangements for independent support, which might be provided by more than one person, to ensure that the needs of each child are met. (Residential special schools: national minimum standards 17.2)

Points for improvement

- The school's policy should be clear on what checks are carried out in relation to governors and trustees and what action is taken as a result of any concerns raised during these checks.
- Senior leaders should ensure professional curiosity when considering the context of safeguarding concerns and ensure records demonstrate decision-making and action taken.

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: 1276600

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Stacey McShane

Type of school: Residential Special School

Telephone number: 01303 815678

Inspector

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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